

## INSPECTION REPORT

**Woodbridge High School**

Woodford Green

LEA area: Redbridge

Unique Reference Number: 102854

Headteacher: Mrs Barbara Haigh

Reporting inspector: Mr Patrick Orr  
T16007

Dates of inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707952

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

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## Information about the school

Type of school	Comprehensive
Type of control	County
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
School address	St Barnabas Road Woodford Green Essex
Telephone number:	0181 504 9618
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr. Richard Hoskins
Date of the previous inspection:	1 <sup>st</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup> May 1995

**Information about the inspection team**

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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R Prescott	English	Library
J Godwood	Mathematics	Accommodation
S Daniel	Science	Equal Opportunities
M Steeds	Design & Technology, Information & Communications Technology	Resources for Learning
M Pennington	Modern Languages	
H Davies	Geography, Religious Education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social & cultural development
G McGinn	History	Curriculum & Assessment, Staffing
G Biscomb		Special Educational Needs
B Simmons	Physical Education	
D Adams	Music	
J Hardy	Business Studies	Key Stage 4, Sixth Form
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London WC2B 6SE

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## Main findings

### What the school does well

Since the last inspection overall standards at GCSE have improved more rapidly than the national improvement

- Pupils' work is of particularly good quality in modern languages, art, music, drama and physical education
- The leadership of the school is strong and effective
- School development planning is of high quality
- The ethos and relationships in the school are good
- Most subjects are well managed
- Teachers are committed and hard-working
- Pupils are well cared for
- There is a good range of well-supported extra-curricular activities
- The school enjoys strong support in the local community
- Governors are supportive and have a wide range of expertise

### Where the school has weaknesses

Despite improvement, standards remain weaker than they should be in English, mathematics, religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and information and communications technology

- I. The sixth form curriculum lacks breadth and depth
- II. Provision for information and communication technology is inadequate
- III. There is unevenness in the distribution of senior management responsibilities and weakness in the management of mathematics
- IV. The short-term exclusion rate is higher than it should be
- V. There is insufficient support for pupils learning English as an additional language
- VI. There are inadequacies in provision for spiritual development and collective worship

**Strengths outweigh weaknesses. Governors will draw up their action plan on the basis of these weaknesses, and this plan will be circulated to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.**

**The school is in a good position to move forward.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

As a result of strong leadership and the commitment and hard work of teachers the school has maintained the strengths identified in 1995 and improved in important respects. Targets have been set for improvement in examination results at Key Stage 4, and have largely been exceeded. Standards have risen at both key stages, but particularly at Key Stage 4. Good work has been done in seeking to raise the achievements of boys. Teaching has improved. Strengths in the teaching of the creative and aesthetic subjects and in modern languages and physical education have been maintained and extended. The curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 has been re-shaped and made more coherent. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved. The teaching day has been lengthened. The range of extra-curricular activities has been extended. The accommodation has been much improved, and there is a new library. Most of the key issues for action identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed in a purposeful and effective way.

However, some of the key issues for action from the last inspection have not been dealt with fully, although the governing body and senior management have identified them for improvement. Further work remains to be done to raise standards in several subjects central to the curriculum - English, mathematics, and information and communications technology. Provision for information and communications technology

remains weak. The sixth form provision is unsatisfactory in some important respects. There has been some increase in the teaching of religious education, but the school still does not meet statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form; nor does it meet requirements for collective worship. There has been little improvement in provision for pupils' spiritual development, although work of good quality has started in this area. Careful thought has been given to the management of behaviour, but more work is needed to reduce the rate of exclusions. Careers education is thoughtfully planned and implemented at Key Stage 3, and is appreciated by pupils. Careers education and guidance are not as good at Key Stage 4.

The school is well placed to make further progress in all areas.

**Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

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

**Notes:**

- a. "Similar" schools are comprehensive schools with a similar percentage of pupils taking free school meals. The free school meal rate is used as an indicator of pupils' socio-economic circumstances.
- b. The intake to comprehensive schools in Redbridge is affected by the fact that there is selection to grammar schools in the borough at the age of 11. The intake to Woodbridge has been below average in recent years, but it is close to average in the current Year 7.
- c. The grades for Key Stage 3 are for performance in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science only. The grades for GCSE are for performance at GCSE in all subjects. It is not, therefore, possible to make direct comparisons between the Key Stage 3 grades and those for the GCSE examinations.
- d. Standards in the core subjects at Woodbridge are rising, but are not as high as they should be, particularly in English and mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- e. 1999 saw a marked rise in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C at GCSE. 47% of pupils reached this level, slightly higher than the national average for 1998. There was also a good rise in pupils' average points score at GCSE.
- f. The most successful subjects at GCSE are art, design and technology, drama, German, Russian, and physical education. The least successful are geography, English and mathematics.
- g. A-level results are below national and local averages and, to judge by an analysis of the 1999 results, represent satisfactory progress only for those who start the course with a firm basis of success at GCSE
- h. There are more boys than girls in most years at the school, and a minority of pupils are learning English as a second language. These factors can have a negative effect on test and examination performance in some subjects.



## Quality of teaching

	<b>Overall quality</b>	<b>Most effective in:</b>	<b>Least effective in:</b>
Years 7-9	Almost always at least satisfactory and often good	Music, physical education, drama, history, modern languages, religious education	Information and communications technology across the curriculum
Years 10-11	Almost always at least satisfactory and often good	Science, physical education, music, drama, modern languages, history, art, geography, design and technology, information technology.	Mathematics, religious education [core], information and communications technology across the curriculum.
Sixth form	At least satisfactory and often good	English, art, history, drama, modern languages, music, information technology,	Chemistry (Year 13), religious education.
English	Satisfactory overall and sometimes good		
Mathematics	Mostly satisfactory		

The teaching is almost always at least satisfactory and is often good or better. Out of the 252 lessons seen, 41 were very good or excellent, 87 were good, 115 were satisfactory and nine were unsatisfactory. The teaching is better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, and best in the sixth form, but the differences are not marked.

It is difficult to separate subjects into “most effective” and “least effective” categories, since strengths and weaknesses in teaching are as often associated with individuals as subjects. Some subjects are better – the creative and aesthetic subjects, modern languages and physical education in particular, but they are not markedly better overall.

The weaknesses in religious education and information and communications technology are mainly because of lack of time for the subjects.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is at least satisfactory and often good, as is the teaching of pupils learning English as an additional language when appropriate support is available.

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

## Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Generally good inside the classroom and round the school. The great majority of pupils are considerate and courteous
Attendance	Satisfactory overall. Occasional unpunctuality.
Ethos*	Good. A clear emphasis on the need to raise standards and the potential for improvement in the school. Good relationships. Strong corporate identity.
Leadership and management	Good. The headteacher provides a strong sense of direction for the school, and has done a great deal to improve its reputation. However, at all levels of management there is a danger of losing the strategic focus on raising standards, because initiatives are not always consolidated sufficiently. The governing body is supportive, has a range of relevant expertise and a good knowledge of the school's life and work. Governors contribute to strategic planning and evaluation. Subject management is mostly good, and in some cases very good or excellent.
Curriculum	Satisfactory. Much improved since the last inspection, but there are continuing weaknesses. In particular, the sixth form curriculum lacks breadth and depth.
English as an additional language	Mainly of good quality, but insufficient in quantity. Not enough well-informed support across the curriculum
Pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Well-informed and appropriately directed. Some weaknesses in using information to monitor and promote progress.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good overall. Significant improvement in cultural development since the last inspection. Despite good work, continuing inadequacies in provision for spiritual development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Accommodation much improved since the last inspection and now satisfactory in most respects. Resources adequate except in information and communication technology. Staffing satisfactory. Induction for new teachers is good.
Value for money	Standards at Key Stage 3 and 4 in most subjects at least satisfactory, and improving. Standards not high enough in English and mathematics. Standards at A-level do not always represent satisfactory progress. Difficult accommodation well managed. Financial systems and planning generally good. The cost of educating each pupil well above average. Satisfactory value for money overall.

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

**The parents' views of the school**

<b>What most parents like about the school</b>	<b>What some parents are not Happy about</b>
VIII. Teachers are caring and approachable IX. Parents are kept well informed X. The school enables pupils to achieve good standards of work XI. The range of extra-curricular activities is wide XII. The school promotes good values and attitudes.	XIII. Some feel they do not receive sufficiently XIV. Homework, because they think that it is it should be. XV. The quality of school meals

Inspectors agreed with parents in most respects. They agreed that the information provided for parents about what is taught should be clearer, but found that the school is already introducing improvements in this area. They agreed that there are some weaknesses in the setting and organisation of homework, but felt that, overall, the school's provision in this area has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory. Inspectors also agreed that the quality of school meals, which are provided entirely by external contractors, is not as good as it should be.

## **Key issues for action**

**In order to raise further the standards of pupils' work, and improve the quality of their education, the governors and staff should take action in the following areas, many of which are already priorities for development:**

### **1. Standards**

- XVI. Extend and develop work already started (particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and the setting of targets) to raise standards in English and mathematics. (Paras. 14, 19, 23, 24, 134-140, 144-154)
- XVII. Increase and improve provision for information and communications technology and religious education, in order to raise standards. (Paras. 219-225, 254-260)
- XVIII. Increase support across the curriculum for pupils learning English as an additional language and build on existing good practice to improve expertise in teaching these pupils. (Para. 73)
- Match recruitment to A-level courses more closely to the demands of the course. (Paras. 30, 32, 74)

### **2. Teaching**

XIX. Build on existing arrangements to share and develop good practice. In this context, pay particular attention to (Paras. 41-53 and subject sections):

- the need to raise expectations, and set tasks that stretch all pupils;
- the need for recapitulation to ensure that learning has taken place;
- the improvement of questioning techniques;
- the use of challenging discussion to extend pupils' understanding;
- the need for a variety of approaches within lessons.

### **3. Curriculum**

- XX. Meet statutory requirements for information and communications technology, and for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. (Para. 63)
- XXI. Improve the breadth and depth of the sixth form curriculum so that it caters appropriately for the full range of attainment and provides continuity from Key Stage 4 in all subjects. (Paras. 75, 131)
- XXII. Improve the quality and increase the extent of careers education and guidance at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. (Para. 70)
- XXIII. Ensure better monitoring and co-ordination of personal and social education. (Para. 71)
- XXIV. Ensure that all pupils have full access to the National Curriculum in physical education. (Para. 67)

### **4. Management**

- XXV. Draw up full plans for the staffing structure the school intends to achieve in the short and medium term. Ensure that all senior and middle managers have clear, appropriate and accountable responsibilities in important areas, and that the balance of responsibilities is evenly spread. (Paras. 104, 131)
- XXVI. Re-formulate the school's aims, so that they provide an effective basis for planning, monitoring and evaluation. (Para. 105)
- XXVII. Review the management of behaviour, with a view to reducing the rate of short-term exclusions. (Para. 34)
- Ensure that details of spending on special educational needs are reported to parents (Paras. 100, 131)

### **5. Provision for pupils' spiritual development**

- XXVIII. Ensure that all subjects make an appropriate contribution to pupils' spiritual development. (Para. 84)

### **6. Health and safety**

XXIX. Ensure that all chemicals are safely stored in science; check the safety implications of having a separate fire alarm system on each site. (Para. 92)

**In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in paragraphs:**

- a. Rectify weaknesses in the arrangements for monitoring unauthorised absence (Para. 91).
- b. Deal with occasional unpunctuality (Para. 38).
- c. Monitor the effects of the number of GCSEs taken by pupils (Para. 22).
- d. Improve pupils' understanding of National Curriculum Levels (Para. 79).
- e. Improve further the use of Individual Education Plans for pupils with SEN (Para. 81).
- f. Raise further boys' achievement (Para. 23).
- g. Continue to improve the quality of marking (Para. 54).
- h. Build on good practice in the setting of homework (Para. 55).
- i. Provide parents with more information about the cross curricular programme (PSE) (Para. 94).
- j. Increase the involvement of non-teaching staff in staff development programmes (Para. 113).

## INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the school

1. The school has its origins in the amalgamation of two single-sex schools in 1972, which now form two groups of buildings about a hundred yards apart on the school site. The school is situated in a suburban area of north-east London consisting of both local authority and privately-owned housing. There are three main contributory primary schools, but pupils come from about 30 overall. The school is now over-subscribed and a greater proportion of pupils than was previously the case come from the immediate locality. There is a variety of educational provision in the area, including the Borough's two single-sex grammar schools, independent schools and voluntary-aided schools.
2. The roll has risen from 1142 (153 in the sixth form) in 1995, the year of the last inspection, to 1373 in 1999 (742 boys and 649 girls, including 106 boys and 89 girls in the sixth form). The size is above the national average for this type of school. The proportion of girls coming to the school (there are single-sex girls' schools in the locality) is rising, and the current Year 7 has more girls than boys. The free school meal rate has fallen from 23% in 1995 to 18% in 1999, which is broadly average in national terms.
3. Just under 60% of pupils are of white UK heritage. Others come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 12% have origins in the Indian sub-continent. English is an additional language for just under 30% of pupils, but most of these were born in the UK and are fluent in English. A small proportion in each year group is just starting to learn English. A larger proportion still has much progress to make in mastering vocabulary and the conventions of written work. The proportion of pupils receiving Section 11 language support is relatively small, at about 3%. The school is affected by a considerable degree of change in the school population. A recent calculation by the school indicates that between 40% and 50% of pupils in the 1998 Year 11 were not at Woodbridge in Year 7. However, the rate of change is reducing.
4. There is little objective evidence about the profile of attainment of the intake. The results of standardised reading tests taken in Year 7 indicate that the intake in recent years has been below average overall. Recent Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results show, however, that the attainment profile on entry is rising, and may now be close to average overall.
5. Two per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs, broadly in line with the national average. The percentage has increased from 1.6% at the time of the last inspection. The percentage of pupils on the register for special educational needs is close to the national average.
6. In 1998, 75% of Year 11 pupils stayed on in full-time education, close to the national figure. About 50% joined the school sixth form. As far as can be judged, approximately 17% of the original year group went to higher education from Year 13, a below average proportion. However, some pupils who leave at 16 go on to higher education from other schools, or from further education. About ten pupils a year leave the school at 16 for sixth forms in other schools - mainly the grammar schools.
7. The school aims, which date from 1986, stress that each pupil should have the opportunity to develop his/her ability to the maximum; that learning should have meaning and be enjoyable; that the curriculum should be broad and balanced; that equal opportunities should be provided for all; and that pupils should be prepared for responsibility and successful social and personal relationships in adult life. Current school priorities are: to raise standards of achievement; to promote monitoring and evaluation; to increase the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum; to develop further the library resources centre; to improve further the quality of the accommodation.
8. Individual and departmental targets are set for performance at GCSE. Targets for the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests are being developed in the core subjects.
9. Thirty-seven is the average GCSE points score target for Year 11 in 2000. (This has been exceeded by

the 1999 Year 11). The target for five or more grades A\*-C for 1999 was 43% (47% reached this level in fact); for 2000 the target is 45%. Ninety-six per cent is the 2000 target for one or more grades A\*-G. This also was exceeded in 1999.

10. The school is applying for Language College status from September 2000.

## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	122	111	233

<b>National Curriculum</b>	<b>Test Results</b>	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	74	67	49
	Girls	80	56	46
	Total	154	123	95
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	66 (49)	54 (58)	41 (50)
	National	65 (--)	60 (--)	56 (--)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	34 (18)	26 (32)	16 (14.5)
	National	35 (--)	36 (--)	27 (--)

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Assessments</b>	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	35	75	65
	Girls	48	77	71
	Total	83	152	136
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	37 (45)	66 (57)	60 (56)
	National	62 (--)	64 (--)	62 (--)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	16 (15)	28 (29)	23 (18)
	National	31 (--)	37 (--)	31 (--)

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	89	86	175

GCSE Results		5 or more grades	5 or more grades	1 or more grades
Number of pupils achieving the Standard specified	Boys	32	83	85
	Girls	37	80	87
	Total	69	163	172
Percentage of candidates achieving the Standard specified	School	39 (34)	93 (81)	98 (92)
	National	44.6 (--)	89.8 (--)	95.2 (--)

### Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>3</sup>

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

Year	M	F	Total
1998	29	30	59

Average A/AS points score per	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
School	11.9 (13.5)	14.7 (14.4)	13.5 (14.0)	1.8 (0.0)	7.3 (2.0)	3.3 (0.8)
National	n/a (--.-)	n/a (--.-)	17.6 (--.-)	n/a (--.-)	n/a (--.-)	2.8 (--.-)

Number in the final year of approved vocational qualifications, and percentage of *such*

	Number	% Success Rate
School	36 (--)	48 (--)

<sup>2</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

<sup>3</sup> 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 Absence	School		10.2
	National comparative data		8.1
Unauthorised absence	School		0.2
	National comparative data		1.1

**Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) During the previous year:		Number
Fixed period		148
Permanent		5

**Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
Very good or better		16
Satisfactory or better		96
Less than satisfactory		4

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school**

#### **Attainment and progress**

##### **Key Stage 3**

11. The results of standardised reading tests and of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests indicate that the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is rising, and that attainment in the current Year 7 is, on average, close to national expectations. The same evidence indicates that attainment on entry in previous years has been, more often than not, below national expectations. Observation of lessons and pupils' work supports the impression that attainment on entry is improving, and is now not far from average. However, the proportion of very high-attaining pupils is smaller than in most comprehensive schools, and the proportion of low-attaining pupils slightly greater, in reading if not in mathematics or science. There is a small number of pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language, and a larger number who still have much progress to make in the more advanced stages of learning English.
12. In the 1998 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment across the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was below the national average for all schools and for schools with similar intakes. The English results were broadly in line with national figures, those in mathematics below, and those in science well below. The provisional results for 1999 show an improvement overall, but are still below the national figures for 1998. In 1999 the science results improved markedly and the English results worsened. The mathematics results improved slightly in terms of those reaching Level 5, but not in terms of overall average levels. Over time, results in all three subjects have improved, and between 1996 and 1998 the improvement was more rapid than the national improvement. Over these years girls' improvement was more rapid than boys' in mathematics and science, but not in English. The difference between boys and girls' attainment is, overall, broadly in line with the national difference.
13. This picture of below average overall attainment across the core subjects at the age of fourteen is largely confirmed by inspection evidence, although not entirely by the teachers' own assessments. The teacher assessments in English in 1998 were lower than the test results. The reverse was true in mathematics and science.
14. In lessons in Year 9, pupils' attainment in English is broadly in line with national expectations: however, standards are higher in reading and spoken English than in written work. Progress in spoken English and reading across the curriculum is satisfactory, but is less good in writing. In mathematics, standards are very slightly below those expected nationally, but most pupils have a good understanding of shape and space and their number skills are improving. Progress is satisfactory. In science at the end of Key Stage 3, standards have risen as a result of good teaching, revision to the curriculum and improved management of the subject. Standards are now close to those expected nationally and progress is satisfactory. However, few pupils achieve very highly in science, although their knowledge and understanding are in most respects at least satisfactory. Progress during the key stage across the core subjects is broadly satisfactory.
15. Attainment in other subjects is consistently in line with national expectations, except in information and communications technology, where it is below, and in drama, where it is above. There are particular strengths in the aesthetic and creative subjects, where progress during the key stage is good. Firm foundations for higher attainment at Key Stage 4 and beyond are laid in art, music and drama. In music, standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Standards in the humanities (geography, history and religious education) have also improved and progress in all these subjects is satisfactory. The weaknesses identified in Key Stage 3 physical education at the time of the last inspection have been largely overcome, progress is now satisfactory and standards are in line with

national expectations. Attainment in modern languages has improved despite a steep dip in French in 1999: overall, attainment matches national expectations and progress is at least satisfactory. Attainment and progress in design and technology are satisfactory overall. Standards in information and communications technology are below expectations, mainly because there are few opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to improve their skills, and they do not make enough progress in the relatively short specialist modules to compensate for this.

16. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3 as a result of well-targeted support work and, where appropriate, short basic skills courses. They frequently make good progress when they receive help for their specific difficulties. In these circumstances, they make better than expected gains in, for example, reading or spelling.
17. Attainment for the majority of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is low when they enter the school. Most of these pupils, about 15% in the current Year 7, have reading ages of two years or more below their actual ages. Overall, they make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3 and there are examples of good results by some pupils at the end of the key stage. Progress is better when lessons are supported by an additional teacher or assistant, and is good in music, art, drama and physical education lessons, and in some science lessons.
18. Overall, pupils learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress during the key stage, mainly because teachers are anxious to help them, if not always aware of the best ways of doing so. These pupils make best progress when they are supported in lessons and the class teacher and support teacher are able to work in tandem. This happens occasionally in English and the humanities subjects, but, overall, specialist support is thinly spread at Key Stage 3.
19. Attainment and progress in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 are not yet good enough, and do not match those in most of the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum. Despite a general improvement in standards across the curriculum, the relative weakness in the core subjects at Key Stage 3 replicates the situation at the time of the last inspection.

#### **Key Stage 4**

20. After allowing for the differences in age, standards at Key Stage 4, in lessons and examinations, are higher than Key Stage 3, as they were at the time of the last inspection. There is, however, less difference than in 1995. Overall, Key Stage 4 standards are now broadly in line with national standards and with standards in similar schools. Progress during the key stage is almost always at least satisfactory and is often good. It accelerates in Year 11, where it was better than expected in over half the lessons seen.
21. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, pupils' average points score rose and was close to the national figure for all schools and for similar schools. In 1999, the points score improved further and exceeded the national figures for 1998, and the targets set by the school for both 1999 and 2000. Results after the last inspection up to 1998 improved broadly in line with the national improvement. It is probable that the improvement accelerated in 1999, but as yet the national GCSE results for this year are provisional and it is not possible to make secure comparisons. Since the last inspection, results for those gaining five or more grades A\*-C have improved, particularly for boys, and they now match national figures. Results for those gaining five or more grades A\*-G and one or more grades A\*-G have consistently been above average. Although girls achieve better than boys, boys were catching them up until 1999, when the girls re-established a margin of advantage greater than the national difference. The increase in the number of boys gaining five or more grades A\*-C reflects hard work in mentoring "borderline" pupils. The increase in boys' average points score since the last inspection, when compared with girls', has been much less obvious. This is possibly the consequence of the concentration, in the mentoring, on those likely to gain higher grades. On the other hand, in most years there are more boys than girls on the school roll and, overall, this can have a negative effect on the school's GCSE results.
22. The 1999 results were an improvement on 1998, particularly for girls who were well ahead of boys.

The overall entry rate went up in this year, to almost nine subjects per pupil on average, from less than eight in the previous year. This change in entry policy increased the numbers gaining five or more grades A\*-C and A\*-G. It will be important for the school to monitor carefully the effects on each pupil of the higher-than-usual number of GCSE entries: it may prove too onerous for many, and deflect some pupils from the study in breadth and depth which would best prepare them for work at A-level.

23. GCSE English results were below national figures in 1998 and fell further in 1999, a circumstance explained, in part but not entirely, by the larger-than-usual proportion of pupils in the year group still in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The 1999 English results did not compare favourably with those in other subjects. The difference between boys' and girls' results has lessened in recent years, but widened considerably in 1999. The higher attainers in English make quite good progress during Key Stage 4, but for most others progress is slow. Nevertheless, during Key Stage 4 pupils make satisfactory gains in fluency in spoken English in informal situations. As at the time of the last inspection, they are less successful in formal situations, although their development of technical language is good in several subjects, including music, physical education, design and technology and drama. They continue to make better progress in reading than writing: this is particularly true of pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language.
24. GCSE mathematics results were below the national average in 1998. There was a slight improvement in 1999, but the results remained below the 1998 averages. In general, mathematics results are below those in other subjects, although there has been a steady improvement from 1997 to 1999. In 1999, girls achieved highly: more generally, there has been little difference between boys' and girls' results in mathematics. In most Key Stage 4 mathematics lessons, standards are slightly below national expectations. Progress in lessons varies, and is unsatisfactory in a significant minority of cases. Analysis of Key Stage 3 and GCSE results indicates that some pupils make unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. Progress is to some extent hampered by an over-reliance on textbooks that are not well suited to pupils' needs.
25. Science emerges as the strongest of the core subjects at Key Stage 4. All pupils are entered for double award GCSE science. In 1998, the results were below the national average, and similar to those in 1997. Girls' performance was slightly higher than boys'. Results improved significantly in 1999. Progress in science during the key stage is mostly good, as a result of good teaching.
26. Despite undoubted improvement since the last inspection, progress and attainment in the core subjects, as at Key Stage 3, are less good, overall, than in many of the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum.
27. In Year 11 lessons in the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, the proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected for their age is much the same as in schools nationally, although the proportion attaining high standards for their age is lower. In this last respect standards reflect those at the time of the last inspection; in other respects, however, they are higher. Standards are above expectations and progress good in art, drama, modern languages, physical education, and graphics and textiles within design and technology. The teaching is mostly good, and occasionally very good or excellent in all these subjects. The teaching and pupils' learning are consistently good in music, and mostly good in history and geography. In these subjects, standards are in line with expectations. Progress and attainment are satisfactory in business studies. Progress is unsatisfactory and standards below those expected in: the food aspects of design and technology, mainly because of long-standing difficulties in staffing the subject; religious education which receives too little curricular time; and information and communications technology, which is not taught effectively across the curriculum. There are too few opportunities for pupils to consolidate and extend their skills in information and communications technology.
28. Progress continues to be satisfactory overall for pupils on the register of special educational needs and, as at Key Stage 3, there are examples of good results by some pupils at the end of the key stage. Again, progress is better when an additional teacher or assistant supports lessons.
29. Pupils learning English as an additional language continue to make satisfactory progress. Many of

those who have advanced skills in English perform highly. The school's analyses of examination results show that, overall, pupils from minority ethnic groups perform well at GCSE, and more highly than pupils of white UK heritage. There are variations across ethnic groups, however. In general, pupils of Indian and Pakistani background perform most highly. Black Caribbean pupils do less well than most other groups. Pupils learning English as an additional language achieve more highly in science than in mathematics. In English, they tend to perform less well, partly because a minority are still at an early stage of learning English.

### **Sixth form**

30. In 1998, the average points score gained by pupils taking two or more A-levels, or their equivalent, was below the national average. In 1999, it was well below. However, the school reports that A-level success rates at Woodbridge have in recent years compared satisfactorily with other comprehensive schools in the borough. Woodbridge loses some of its more able pupils each year at the age of 16, most transferring to one or other of the grammar schools. This has a negative effect on the A-level results. Nevertheless, the 1999 results, which were lower than in previous years, did not represent satisfactory added value overall in many instances. If account is taken of the prior attainment at GCSE of the students concerned, those who started their A-level courses with a reasonably firm GCSE base made better progress than the others. A significant minority, mainly low attainers, gained little in terms of qualifications from their A-level studies.
31. The relatively small numbers in most A-level lessons make subject-based comparisons with national standards difficult. In English, students build successfully on their earlier learning and many make good progress. A-level English results are in line with the national average although there are relatively few high grades in most years. Mathematics A-level results vary from year to year, but are broadly in line with the national average and with results in other subjects in the school. In mathematics lessons, standards are in line with expectations for the course. Science A-level results, overall, have been broadly in line with national figures in recent years, though lower in chemistry than the other sciences. Standards in design and technology are below course expectations in the present Year 13, though higher in Year 12. Progress varies but is mainly satisfactory. In French and German, students find the transition to A-level from the modular course at GCSE difficult, but most make good progress and results in A-level modern languages are very good. In geography and history, small groups of students make satisfactory progress and achieve results that match their previous attainment. Psychology and economics are popular subjects and the overall pass rates are at least satisfactory in these subjects although the proportion of higher grades is low. Results in theatre studies have varied and indicate that many students find the transition to the more academic A-level course from GCSE difficult. However, lessons observed suggest that A-level standards in practical work in this subject in 2000 will be high.
32. Overall, the proportion of students gaining high grades at A-level is below the national average for comprehensive schools; and the proportion failing or gaining no grade is above average. In terms of "raw" A-level results, improvement since the last inspection has been much less than the national improvement. The average points score for candidates taking fewer than two A-levels has consistently been above national averages since 1996. However, in 1999 this circumstance largely reflected the fact that a third of A-level students, including several of the higher attainers, sat the examination in only two subjects. The proportion achieving qualifications in GNVQ was below the national figure in 1998, although attainment in business was satisfactory. GNVQ assignments are well planned by experienced and accredited staff, whose assessment decisions are appropriate.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

33. Pupils' attitudes to learning were positive at the time of the last inspection and this is still the case. Most pupils listen to the teachers, concentrate and willingly do what is asked of them. They are involved in their learning, enter into discussions, ask and answer questions – as in several Key Stage 3 personal and social education lessons - and take pride in their work. They are able to organise their work and select and use appropriate resources, particularly where the work is of a practical nature. However, some pupils are too teacher-dependent because they either lack confidence in spoken English

or have not been in school long enough to benefit from initiatives that have helped others in their learning and language skills. A small minority of pupils is less well motivated: some of these have behavioural problems and become frustrated easily. They take less interest in work and are occasionally disruptive, but are well managed by most teachers. There is evidence of perseverance in the GCSE and vocational coursework. Sixth form students are keen to succeed and have good study skills. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language respond well to support in class.

34. Behaviour and relationships are good. Pupils are friendly, helpful and polite. Most abide by the school rules, which are known and understood by them. The great majority of parents responding to the questionnaire agreed that the school achieves good standards of behaviour. Inspectors found that relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are good. Pupils from all backgrounds are well integrated into the life of the school and they work together happily both in lessons - good examples were seen in art, English, drama and information and communications technology lessons - and in other school activities, sharing resources and ideas. The views of other pupils are well listened to and respected; for example during discussions in English and drama lessons. A particularly good example was seen in a Year 12 debate during the inspection week. Movement around the school is orderly; although a few examples of immature behaviour were seen in the circulation areas of the school. School property is well respected, but there is some careless dropping of litter. Fixed period exclusions in the school have much increased since the last inspection. Most have been for a day or two, and have involved a number of pupils who have behavioural problems or who were admitted after Year 7. The school is seeking to avoid short-period exclusions, some of which are for minor offences. The number of permanent exclusions is average for the size of school and has not altered since the last inspection. The arrangements for exclusion are satisfactory.
35. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are confident. They are interested in reading and most are well skilled in using the library. By the time pupils reach Key Stage 4, most are able to extract information and use research materials with growing confidence. Library and other resources such as the Internet are well used for research work. Where opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are provided, such as raising money for charitable causes and participating in external competitions, these responsibilities are carried out diligently. Pupils also show responsible attitudes and many willingly take part in the school and year councils, Year 11 pupils provide counselling for the victims of bullying and the sixth form pupils help younger pupils in reading. There are examples of pupils' developing confidence in practical areas of the curriculum and through community links such as those provided by the work experience placements in Year 10 and participation in the successful Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Pupils take part in residential visits including trips abroad and have coped well with travel and living away from home.
36. Pupils with special educational needs respond very well both in the classroom and when working outside the classroom. They work willingly with learning support teachers, and are able to discuss and answer questions confidently. At Key Stage 4, opportunities are provided for some pupils with special educational needs to take responsibility for the work they have to do and the support they require: most respond well.

### **Attendance**

37. Attendance, overall, has improved since the last inspection in that the gap between the school's attendance and the national average has reduced. However, pupils' attendance was still below the national average in 1998-99, although the rate of unauthorised absence was lower than the national average. Attendance is generally well above 90%, except in Years 10 and 11, where it is frequently below. Most absences are the result of illness, family holidays (in a few cases) or other circumstances. Attendance varies from year to year, tutor group to tutor group and week to week (more so in Years 10 and 11). Absences do not demonstrate any particular pattern. Attendance during the inspection week was satisfactory. Pupils who do not attend regularly are not benefiting fully from the curriculum offered.
38. The school day generally starts promptly although a small number of pupils arrive late to school.

Pupils move purposefully between classrooms and buildings and so ensure that most lessons start on time. There is some unpunctuality among sixth formers. [Subsidiary issue]

## Quality of education provided

### Teaching

39. The teaching is satisfactory overall. There is, however, much good teaching. Out of the 252 lessons seen 41 were very good or excellent, 87 were good, 115 were satisfactory and nine were unsatisfactory. Teachers are hard working and committed to achieving high standards. The teaching has improved since the last inspection as a result, in part at least, of the school's carefully planned arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of work in the classroom. The quality of teaching is reasonably consistent across subjects. Some subjects are better – the creative and aesthetic subjects, modern languages and physical education in particular - but they are not markedly better than the others. The teaching is least effective in mathematics, but even here there are examples of thorough and effective work. Strengths and weaknesses in teaching are as often associated with individuals as with subjects.
40. There is less difference in the quality of teaching between key stages than at the time of the last inspection. Nevertheless, the teaching is better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Within this overall picture, however, the teaching is slightly weaker in Years 9 and 10 than in other years. As in 1995, the teaching is best in the sixth form, but the difference now is not marked.
41. The satisfactory or better quality of the teaching in the great majority of lessons is attributable to a variety of factors. The main strengths are teachers' good subject knowledge, thorough lesson planning and effective class management.
42. Standards of class management are good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are almost always good, and often very good. Behaviour is well managed. When teachers have problems with uncooperative behaviour it rarely leads to serious disruption. Difficulties are usually dealt with quickly and efficiently. Although lateness affects a minority of lessons, mainly because of the need to travel between buildings, most lessons get off to a brisk and business-like start and the pace is usually maintained throughout. There are exceptions, for example in a few art lessons in Key Stage 3, when the momentum drifts away in the last ten minutes or so. In science and religious education lessons also, the pace occasionally gets too slow. In a range of subjects, pupils in lower-attaining groups often find it difficult to maintain concentration throughout the hour-long lessons when the teaching lacks variety. This is not a difficulty in the majority of lessons.
43. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and most transfer this effectively to pupils. Enthusiasm for teaching, and for the subject, is the most obvious feature of the best lessons. There are more very good lessons than at the time of the last inspection. In a Year 10 German lesson, the teacher used the language with the utmost confidence, adapting easily and sensitively to the pace and understanding of individual pupils in a class containing a wide range of linguistic competence. The teaching was lively throughout, but with frequent and appropriate checks for understanding. Pupils' responded instantly, aware of the teacher's high expectations. They surprised themselves by the level of understanding they achieved. In a Year 11 mixed ability history lesson, the teacher kept firm but calm control over a class excitedly involved in work on prohibition in America. Pupils were pushed hard, and successfully, to think for themselves, with brisk changes of pace to retain interest, and strict deadlines for each task. Pupils who found it difficult to express themselves were encouraged to overcome these difficulties, and the lesson as a whole was highly successful. In a Year 11 upper set science lesson on reflection and refraction, the learning objectives were shared clearly with the pupils who had an exact appreciation of what was expected of them. The teaching was accomplished and enthusiastic, and the pace very good throughout. Learning was checked and reinforced, and pupils made very good progress.
44. Newly qualified teachers, and teachers new to the school, are well supported and enabled to adapt quickly to departmental "house styles" and share the new ideas and approaches they bring with them. A significant proportion of the best teaching in the school is by recently appointed teachers, many of

them relatively new to the profession. There are two unqualified teachers. Although they have much to learn, the school is providing good support for them and looking to develop the potential in each.

45. Teachers' planning is generally good. Most schemes of work provide helpful guidance on continuity. In most lessons, teachers have clear intentions and strategies for meeting these objectives. In history, there were particularly good examples of lesson objectives being explained clearly to pupils. In modern languages, planning is thorough, although occasionally insufficient account is taken of the needs of pupils with special educational needs or who are learning English as an additional language. Much of the teaching in religious education is marked by appropriate and clear objectives for pupils' learning. In music, pupils' individual needs are usually very well planned for, and met.
46. There are no aspects of teaching that are unsatisfactory overall, although there is room for improvement in many areas. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons, the main weaknesses are one or more of the following: inadequate class control; insufficient variety; a failure to engage the interest and attention of the majority of pupils; a lack of awareness of the range of needs in a class; or a lack of specialist expertise.
47. The last inspection identified the following areas of general weakness: the small number of very good or excellent lessons; the narrow range of teaching styles; the fact that didactic teaching sometimes limited the work of support staff; inconsistency in the marking of pupils' work; a failure to use homework effectively to extend pupils' learning; a lack of opportunities for independent learning; and a lack of challenge for able pupils in many lessons.
48. In each of these areas there has been improvement; in some it has been considerable.
49. The range of teaching styles is broader. In science, the variety of activities for pupils is good, although their impact is sometimes reduced by the tendency of a few teachers to talk too much. Drama teaching is almost always varied and interesting although, as in science, occasionally marred by teachers' over-lengthy explanations. There is very good variety in most modern languages lessons. In mathematics, on the other hand, too many lessons follow a routine format with few opportunities for discussion. Mathematics teachers do not test pupils' understanding sufficiently by encouraging them to explain what they are learning. This limits the development of their understanding. In several other subjects, including English, dialogue between teachers and pupils, and the asking of "how?" "why?" or "if not that, then what if?" questions are more rare than they should be.
50. Collaborative planning between support teachers and assistants and class teachers has developed, and is often of good quality, but there are still instances where the effectiveness of support is reduced as a result of over-dominant teaching. In a Year 11 English lesson, for example, a support teacher had relatively few opportunities to help a pupil with a statement of special educational needs, or a beginner bilingual, because the class teacher, partly as a result of uncertain control of the class, spent most of the lesson explaining themes and details to the whole class.
51. Opportunities for independent learning have increased since the last inspection. Good practice was observed in history, science and drama, among other subjects. The school is promoting the use of the newly refurbished library effectively in this regard.
52. It is still the case that high-attaining pupils are often not challenged enough, although practice is better than at the time of the last inspection. For example, teachers do not always demand enough of higher attainers in design and technology, or in some of the upper sets in modern languages in Years 9 and 10. In information and communications technology, however, good questioning techniques are used to challenge most talented pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In history at Key Stage 4, higher attainers make good progress in class in developing good skills of discussion and critical thinking, especially in effectively evaluating sources and interpreting evidence. Sixth form students in English and history develop a good critical awareness. These features are not found to a sufficient extent across the curriculum. Discussion is often limited in depth and extent, and the tasks set are sometimes pitched at too low a level of expectation.



53. Most teachers make appropriate use of day-to-day assessment to identify who is having difficulty in learning. Most give relevant praise and verbal feedback during lessons. Fewer, however, use day-to-day assessment effectively to discover who needs further challenge. Teachers often do not give the necessary time to ensure that the learning of key material in a lesson (including language) has actually taken place. They are better at recapitulation of earlier learning at the beginning of a lesson. Particularly good examples of this were seen in drama and modern languages.
54. Marking is now satisfactory in almost all subjects. This is a considerable improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. Marking is generally good in English, music, history, art, business studies and physical education, and in modern languages except that departmental policy is not always followed. Although marking is usually regular and careful, in most subjects there are relatively few constructive and well-informed comments to show pupils what to do to improve. English provides an example of good practice in this area.
55. Inspection evidence indicates that homework is quite well managed throughout the school, despite the concerns of some parents about its quality. Most pupils interviewed on this topic were positive in their responses, although a few complained that they had not been adequately prepared during Key Stage 3 for the increase in the amount of homework from the beginning of Key Stage 4. A few also complained about the difficulties that resulted from homework timetables not being adhered to by teachers. A parent of a girl in Key Stage 3 complimented the school strongly for its knowledge of and concern for individual pupils, but found it difficult to see why her daughter had to spend so many hours a week just keeping abreast of homework which often occupied rather than challenged her. Despite these weaknesses, the overall picture of homework is satisfactory. More frequently than was the case at the time of the last inspection, homework serves as a genuine extension to work in the classroom. It is usually marked regularly and quickly and, in the sixth form, with much thought and concern for students' learning needs.
56. Equal opportunities practice in the classroom is mainly good. Few examples were seen of boys being allowed to dominate the lesson by calling out or answering all the questions. Boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds usually work together readily in pairs and groups, for instance in drama, and they learn from one another's perspectives.
57. The support for pupils learning English as an additional language is mostly of good quality, but insufficient in quantity. In most departments, although the situation is better than at the time of the last inspection, there is still insufficient awareness of the language-learning needs of developing bilinguals. Teachers do, however, know number of pupils in their class learning English as an additional language, and the stage each has reached. In a number of subjects good learning materials are produced that help these pupils to make good progress. Some good collaborative teaching was seen, for example in the Year 12 GNVQ group, but this sort of practice is not widespread.
58. The school's approach to the range of attainment within each class is to plan a curriculum and use methods that make learning possible for pupils with poor literacy and numeracy skills. Some teachers do this well and - for example in some lessons in art, modern languages, physical education, geography, science, religious education, mathematics and music - the work planned achieves this successfully for pupils with special educational needs. All teachers have good information about pupils with statements of special educational need and often work co-operatively with a support teacher or assistant. In some lessons, joint planning and shared teaching are particularly effective and beneficial for any pupil with difficulties during the lesson. Learning support teachers and assistants are sensitive to the social as well as the learning needs of pupils. They are very skilled in giving help generally and specifically without being over-protective or excessively supportive of individuals.
59. Pupils with special educational needs have more difficulty in some lessons in English, information and communications technology, science and history, and with written though not practical work in design and technology. Generally, they make less progress when there is no additional adult support in the lesson.
60. Teaching is satisfactory and often good for pupils working individually with a teacher on programmes

to help them with particular difficulties with literacy. Teachers know pupils very well, expectations are realistic and teachers and pupils seem to enjoy working together. The additional studies course in Key Stage 4 is an opportunity for pupils to get individual help with homework or coursework. Teachers provide support and advice and some specific teaching. Where the pupils are ready to accept this approach, teaching is valuable, but not all pupils in the newly formed Year 10 group have adjusted to this style of working. The sessions are well managed and expectations about behaviour are made clear.

## **The curriculum and assessment**

### **Curriculum**

61. Overall, the organisation and content of the curriculum make a satisfactory contribution to the educational standards in the school. The curriculum is better at Key Stages 3 and 4 than in the sixth form.
62. Since the last inspection, a number of improvements have been made. The total teaching time has been lengthened to 25 hours a week within a two-week timetable, which is above the recommended minimum for Key Stage 3 and in line with that for Key Stage 4. This has provided more flexibility in the timetable, notably for a second modern language, and has given more time for mathematics and music, and time for an extra option group at Key Stage 4. Pupils can now study ten GCSE subjects, begin vocational courses in Key Stage 4, or take an additional studies option (to support their learning) in lieu of one GCSE. The school has made positive efforts to address the need for more provision for the cultural development of the pupils, though the provision for spiritual development is still inadequate. A good range of extra-curricular activities is being enjoyed by a large number of pupils.
63. However, the other key issues concerning the curriculum in the previous report have not been dealt with fully. Although there is now a module on religious education in the cross curricular (personal and social education) programme at Key Stage 4, the time allocation is low and provision does not comply with statutory requirements. There is also inadequate provision of religious education in the sixth form. At Key Stage 4, the weaknesses in the provision for information and communications technology through other subject areas have not been overcome. Consequently, apart from those studying GCSE information systems, pupils are not receiving their full entitlement. In other respects, the school meets statutory requirements for the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4.
64. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 provides satisfactory breadth and balance and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal and social education. Classes are set by ability in mathematics and modern languages from Year 8; otherwise, groups are of mixed ability. The time allocation to subjects is broadly in line with recommendations. German and Russian are now available as a second language in Year 8, though the progress of some pupils in their second language is hindered by their having only one lesson a week. Over Key Stage 3 as a whole, the allocation of time to history and geography is just adequate. In Year 8, however, where the allocation is low, careful timetabling is necessary to ensure coverage of the programmes of study.
65. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been thoroughly reviewed. There is an extended core of English language and literature, mathematics, double science for all, design and technology, personal and social education (which includes careers and religious education), a modern foreign language and physical education. In Year 10, pupils may choose three additional subjects from a wide range of possibilities, designed to provide for the humanities and cater for pupils' different interests and aptitudes. The Year 10 arrangements have just reached Year 11. Pupils in both years are now provided with a satisfactory balance of subjects.
66. Almost all Key Stage 4 pupils follow courses leading to GCSE examinations. However, there are also opportunities for pupils to gain alternative accreditation through courses such as the GNVQ Part 1 in business and health and social care, which take up two option slots. Additional studies provides curricular enrichment by supporting coursework and core subject skills and leads to the certificate of achievement in literacy and numeracy. Provision for information and communications technology across the curriculum is inadequate.

67. The curriculum generally provides equality of access for all pupils to learn and make progress. There is one disapplication from the National Curriculum in design and technology. The option scheme in Key Stage 4 provides equal access to a wide range of subjects. The only limitation is in physical education at Key Stage 3 where boys cannot study dance and girls cannot take part in outdoor pursuits.
68. The curriculum is extended and enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There is good provision of sporting activities with inter-school competitions. About half the pupils take part in extra-curricular sport, which is the average level of participation in schools. In addition to the strong support of members of the physical education department, other teachers make a satisfactory contribution. There are three trips a year to the LEA outdoor pursuits centre at Glasbury-on-Wye and an annual ski trip. The mathematics department, among others, organises an activities week in Glasbury, where pupils do activities during the day and analyse the mathematical aspects during the evening. There are theatre, museum and field trips, such as the Year 9 history trip to the First World War battlefields in France. The modern languages department provides an impressive programme of exchanges and residential visits to France, Germany and, as is planned for the immediate future, Russia. The extra-curricular provision in music is very extensive, with nearly a quarter of the school being involved in the award-winning choir, orchestra, and other musical groups, in addition to an annual musical production. The drama department makes significant and regular contributions, including ambitious productions by younger pupils. The school makes good provision for community languages, outside the timetabled day. Pupils make satisfactory progress in most of the languages offered. Two Urdu lessons were seen, in both of which the teaching was good. Pupils respond in large numbers to the opportunities provided across the curriculum in revision classes and lunchtime help clubs.
69. The planning of courses provides, in general, satisfactory continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they move through the school. The collaboration between the school and its primary schools is good in English, science, art, music and modern foreign languages, with master classes for Year 6 pupils in some of these subjects, and in mathematics. However, curricular liaison in other subjects is less developed, and the school has not yet taken on board fully the implications for secondary education of the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools. **[Subsidiary issue].** Although the school has close academic ties with its four nearest contributory primaries, less developed links - a circumstance difficult to overcome, given the large number of schools involved - with the others can result in delays in disseminating to subjects the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test scores. The ten-week module for information and communications technology in Years 7 and 8 is insufficient to provide continuity and progression in the required skills. Students studying GNVQs at intermediate level in the sixth form cannot move on to advanced GNVQ's within the school, although there are plans to rectify this in business studies from September 2000.
70. Careers education and guidance have some satisfactory and some good features, but there are also weaknesses. At Key Stage 3, the well-organised programme takes place over eight to ten weeks each year. Pupils value the sessions despite the lapses of time between modules. The programme provides pupils with a good grounding. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have limited access to careers advice despite the fact that the school works closely with the careers service providers. Pupils interviewed regarded the four, one-hour sessions which take place in each of Years 10 and 11 as of limited value in helping them make informed and realistic choices about their futures. Although the link with the careers service is strong, pupil contact with the careers officer is restricted to about 40% of pupils at Key Stage 4. Furthermore, preparation for the well-organised work experience programme involves additional withdrawal from normal timetabled lessons. Provision for careers education and guidance at Key Stage 4 is inadequate. Post-16 advice and support is mainly through the sixth form pastoral structure, the head of careers and individual tutors. Interviews with the careers officer can be arranged. The school organises an "Employers' Day" at the end of Year 10, and the LEA provides an annual careers convention. As a result of current government priorities, the amount of external careers guidance is to be reduced, except for lower-attaining pupils and students. Compensatory measures have not yet been planned.

71. There is satisfactory provision for health, sex and drugs education through a ten-week module in the cross curricular programme. It is co-ordinated by the head of Year 7 and taught appropriately, mostly by science staff. The sex education policy meets statutory requirements and has the governors' approval. There is an appropriate emphasis on the moral and physiological aspects in Years 7 and 8 and on the moral, legal and personal aspects in Year 9. Overall, co-ordination of the complex strands that make up the cross-curricular themes of careers, health education, information and communications technology and personal and social education is difficult. There are no clear structures in place to monitor the effectiveness of the delivery of these programmes.
72. In addition to the work planned to meet all needs in each subject area, the school provides other opportunities for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils in Year 7, whose reading ages are two years or more below their actual ages, have opportunities to work with a skilled learning support teacher for short periods during reading lessons, or at the start of the school day. However, the work planned is less varied and stimulating than it might be if the department had a wider range of resources to choose from. There is insufficient use of computer facilities. The additional studies course in Key Stage 4, organised as an alternative to a GCSE subject, provides time and support for some pupils with special educational needs, but there is a lack of clarity about the purpose and content for Year 10 pupils, and the lessons planned do not clearly match the outline scheme. Year 11 pupils gain from the time and support for GCSE coursework and this is an appropriate use of the time available.
73. Specialist help for pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL) is provided by one full-time and one part-time teacher, both employed by the LEA support service. There are also two bilingual learning support assistants. In addition, a member of the English department provides EAL support, mainly in relation to assessment and multicultural matters. As a group, they provide important help, mainly in helping beginner bilinguals and in developing collaborative teaching with certain subject departments, chiefly English and the humanities. The language-focused support is insufficient. The immediate needs of individual pupils are not met fully, and teachers across the curriculum are not given sufficient advice in understanding the language-learning needs of developing bilingual pupils.

**73. Sixth Form**

74. The sixth form curriculum lacks breadth and balance. However, the school provides a good range of 21 A-level subjects, with two additional subjects in "twilight" time. A-levels are taken by nearly three-quarters of the sixth form students, with most following three subjects at the beginning of their course. A substantial minority drop one subject during their course, in order to concentrate more effectively on the other two. Many post-16 classes are very small, for example in music, French, physics, design and technology and history. The school is prepared to protect certain subjects (in particular modern foreign languages and music), which it sees as important for the further development of sixth form provision. Students are not always well matched to the demands of the courses they follow. The school requires a minimum entry grade of C at GCSE for each A-level subject taken, which is lower than in many schools. Furthermore, departments have the discretion to accept a few students with lower grades if they feel they can cope with the demands of the course. The school reports that such students sometimes more than justify the allowances made on their behalf. Nevertheless, A-level results suggest that some students may not be receiving appropriate or accurate advice on the choice of post-16 courses. Students entering the sixth form are given a largely free choice of subjects, and, in a small number of cases, this results in students embarking on A-level courses that are unbalanced.
75. There are GNVQ intermediate courses in business studies, leisure and tourism, art and design, science and hospitality and catering, involving a total of 49 students. However, there are currently no GNVQ advanced courses to progress to, nor is it possible to take combinations of A levels and GNVQs. This limits opportunities for those sixteen year olds who are considering alternatives to the traditional A-level route. Retake GCSE classes are offered in English and mathematics, and results are reasonable.
76. There is no recognised general studies course for sixth formers, but students are provided with a range of activities through a weekly form period. For example, as part of an additional studies programme they can take part in pre-driver training. They also have sixth form debates on topics such as

genetically-modified crops. One took place during the inspection week, and was successful except that students relied too heavily on prepared texts. Provision for physical education is extremely limited. There is very little religious education, and no provision for information and communications technology outside the GNVQs. Careers guidance is available for individual students, but there is no careers education as such except for GNVQ students through the content of their courses and their preparation for work experience placements.

77. The governors and school are aware of the need to review urgently certain aspects of the sixth form curriculum.

### **Assessment**

78. Significant improvements have been made in assessment since the last inspection. In response to concerns raised in the 1995 report, the school has reviewed its assessment policy. The systems for assessing, recording and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are now good. Although the school's marking and assessment policies require updating, all subjects have satisfactory policies of their own that reflect the carefully thought-through conclusions of an assessment working party. Assessment procedures are now more fully implemented than before, with assessments related closely to the National Curriculum or external validation requirements in nearly all subjects. Most departments have moderated portfolios of pupils' work for Key Stage 3. Opportunities for pupils to assess their own work are provided in subjects such as English, art, music, drama, and business studies. However, pupils are not adequately informed of National Curriculum levels in a number of subjects, including geography and modern languages.
79. Very detailed information is available about the performance of individual pupils in different areas of school life. These are effectively recorded in their progress files, and contribute to National Records of Achievement that are completed in the spring of Year 11. Helpful termly checks are used to monitor academic progress, with annual reports indicating attainment in subjects. The reports are mostly of good quality and refer to subject-specific skills and targets for improvement. However, the grades used in the Key Stage 3 reports can be confusing for pupils and parents since they are alphabetical rather than numerical and in consequence cannot easily be related to National Curriculum levels.
80. The school makes good use of assessment to inform planning. The most effective practice in this regard is at Key Stage 4, where Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results are used to provide minimum target grades for Year 10 pupils, whose progress is then monitored by subject and pastoral staff. Academic interviews every term provide a focus for this monitoring. The arrangements have been supplemented by a programme of mentoring for about a third of the pupils in Year 11, which has been effective in raising achievement at GCSE, particularly for boys. There are also examples in subjects of the good use of assessment to inform planning. In modern languages, for example, teachers have adapted their schemes of work in response to GCSE results, and history staff have adopted a GCSE syllabus felt to be more appropriate for raising the achievement of boys. English, music, art, drama and business studies also use data well to monitor pupils' progress, set standards, and so raise expectations. The school is starting to use information from the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests to predict future attainment. However, as the Key Stage 2 results are not fully validated and complete until well into the term after they are taken, a number of departments are not using the data to inform their planning in the same effective way as Key Stage 3 data are used at Key Stage 4. However, plans are well under way to generate target grades for Year 8 pupils and to extend the current individual targeting in the core subjects to all subjects in Year 9. It will be important for senior managers to monitor closely the amount of work generated by these arrangements, in relation to their effectiveness.
81. The learning support department provides baseline assessments of all pupils in Year 7, based on information from primary colleagues, National Curriculum tests and the results of a recognised, commercial reading test. From this information and from statements of special educational need, the key support teacher for each pupil compiles an individual education plan (IEP), which is available for all subject teachers. Although these plans are of better quality than at the time of the last inspection, and although subject teachers use them more consistently and effectively, there is room for further improvement. At an early stage in the autumn term, staff who teach Year 7 pupils meet to share their

assessment of where help is likely to be needed. This, supplemented by the information provided, is a good basis for deciding on the support and additional teaching needed. Assessment of progress from day to day is well documented by support teachers and support assistants. Regular reviews of progress are made, gathering information from all subject teachers. However, the data available in the school, such as Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results, are not used normally on a continuous basis to track progress and identify weaknesses.

82. Assessment of pupils learning English as an additional language is good. They are identified carefully and their competence in English analysed and recorded clearly. Information to staff is presented in a manageable form, but with insufficient, simple supporting advice about ways in which pupils' language development should be promoted, in written work in particular. The different requirements of pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are carefully distinguished.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

83. Overall, provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural education is good. Provision for spiritual development is less successful. Furthermore, the aims of the school do not clearly support these aspects of pupils' personal development. Since the last inspection, the school has reviewed its provision with some care. A very well thought-out school policy has been written and subject departments have been asked to consider how they can contribute. However, the policy still is not translated into a planned provision across all subjects. At present some departments have not recognised the importance of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the ways in which they can contribute.
84. As at the time of the last inspection, provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Some improvement has, however, taken place. There are occasions, for example in English, when pupils reflect upon spiritual aspects of existence through the study of poetry and literature. In drama, pupils consider different aspects of the human condition, but such opportunities are not exploited fully because the department is not fully aware of what it is doing implicitly. The religious education department continues to make a significant contribution, even though the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are not met fully. Pupils are given opportunities to develop an awareness of something greater than the "here and now" and to engage in a search for purpose and meaning in life. Assemblies provide opportunities for reflection, but the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is not met. In the registration periods observed, issues were very rarely discussed and time for reflection was missing. The school's policy for a "thought of the day or week" had little effect in practice. Most subjects have not identified opportunities to develop the spiritual dimension in their teaching.
85. A majority of teachers by their own example and expectations that pupils will behave considerately act as good role models for pupils. The school aims to develop values such as honesty and fairness, and pupils are very clearly made aware of the differences between right and wrong. They are expected to show respect for one another and for accepted codes of behaviour, and do so. The personal and social education programmes cover a number of topics that raise pupils' awareness of issues such as rights and responsibilities, freedom, prejudice and conventions accompanying friendship. There are many opportunities in history, religious education, English and drama to consider complex relationships and humanitarian issues, for example racism, prejudice, slavery and the sanctity of the life. Pupils benefit from working in orderly classroom environments with accepted and predictable responses, rewards and sanctions. Physical education makes a positive contribution through valuing positive behaviour and reinforcing good relationships and mutual respect. Provision for moral development is good.
86. The ethos and daily activities of the school provide a caring and secure environment where relationships are founded on mutual respect and co-operation. Provision for the development of social skills is good. The school now provides many opportunities for pupils to show initiative and accept responsibility. These include year and house councils in addition to the whole school council, as well as many activities in forms, clubs and sport. There is also community service in and outside the school, and sixth form students work closely with Key Stage 3 pupils, in particular helping with literacy. Some Year 11 and sixth form students get experience of community work through their

involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Pupils are given opportunities to work collaboratively in many subjects, developing teamwork skills and learning to value the contribution of their peers. Issues such as relationships, friendships and the development of inter-active skills are considered in the cross curricular programme. Social interaction is also promoted through a very good range of extra-curricular activities, field study trips and visits both in this country and abroad. Work experience in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form provides experience of the world of work. Pupils' awareness of the needs of the less fortunate in society is developed through many charitable fund-raising events.

87. The provision for pupils to develop an understanding of their own and other cultures has improved considerably since the last inspection. It is now good. There are many visits to places of cultural interest in this country and abroad. There are theatre visits. Cultural diversity is particularly well developed in modern languages where it is intrinsic to all the department's work. Within the curriculum of other subjects, for example religious education, English, history, art and music, the cultural content of lessons is good. A wide range of world music is studied, and in English multicultural literature is evident in prose texts and poetry. In religious education, pupils consider the contribution of major faiths to life in contemporary Britain.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

88. There were well-managed procedures for pupils' welfare and guidance at the time of the last inspection and this remains true overall. Pupils' welfare and development are strongly emphasised through the cross curricular programme that includes consideration of bullying, relationships, sex education and drugs awareness, citizenship and careers, and is mostly taught by a team of specialist teachers. It is complemented by the formal and informal support provided by the staff. Induction arrangements are effective and pupils new to the school settle in quickly. Form tutors remain with their forms as they progress through the school and they get to know their pupils well. This contributes to positive relationships. The pastoral structure involving year co-ordinators, house activities co-ordinators and a deputy head is cohesive.
89. Relationships are good. Teachers know pupils' needs and address them well. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' personal development, behaviour and academic progress are at least satisfactory, and in many respects good. Pupils' individual progress is carefully recorded and reviewed. The information so gathered is well used to support pupils, for example by mentoring Key Stage 4 pupils, agreeing minimum target grades and providing additional study opportunities for them. Sixth form reviews and target setting include non-academic elements, for example voluntary work. Pupils' personal development is monitored through the end-of-year reports and regular year co-ordinators' and year team meetings, where matters relating to pupils' welfare and progress are discussed. Specialist and welfare services are used effectively to support pupils' welfare and personal development.
90. The behaviour policy operates well. Behavioural expectations are made clear and school rules are applied firmly. "Good behaviour" is publicly acknowledged at the presentation evenings. Pupils with behaviour that causes concern, including bullying, are helped effectively. Pupils and parents appreciate initiatives such as peer counselling ("Trust and Tell") for the victims of bullying. An "on-call" room provides good opportunities to contain behaviour. The school has very recently appointed a special educational needs teacher with appropriate expertise to extend the scope of this room by supporting individual pupils and providing advice for staff. This is a step in right direction. Good performance is acknowledged and pupils value rewards. Use of the school uniform is well established. Pupils' behaviour is good.
91. Routines for monitoring attendance are in place and registration requirements are met. There is, however, an issue in that unauthorised absences are not always accurately counted. Although good attendance is promoted with some success through policies, the school prospectus and rewards, there is in fact more emphasis on reducing absence rates than on promoting good attendance. The "absence hot line" system works effectively. The year co-ordinators are involved appropriately in dealing with concerns over attendance and they liaise with the education social worker very well. This situation has improved since the last inspection and there is now a good working partnership with the education

welfare service. Most form tutors challenge lateness to school. The school is making progress in improving attendance, but has not introduced initiatives intended to promote good attendance over the longer term among pupils from the least co-operative families.

92. Arrangements for dealing with child protection issues are in order. The school is required to adopt LEA policy, although this in itself does not ensure regular updating of expertise or dissemination of current thinking in the area. Pupils feel safe and secure. Effective practice is in place to promote the welfare of all pupils on the school site except for the fact that the two sites have individual fire alarms; this has safety implications, since the staff and pupils move frequently from one building to another, and the sixth form students have flexibility of movement. Trained staff who clearly understand their responsibilities administer first aid. All incidents are properly recorded. The school provides a safe and clean environment, suitable for learning. There are a few weaknesses in the arrangements for storing chemicals in science, which are referred to in the science subject section in this report. The school does not control its catering provision, which was the subject of strong complaints by some parents who criticised the lack of space for eating, quality, and the lack of attention to good practice in healthy eating.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

93. The overall situation has not changed much since the last inspection, in that the school has maintained its efforts to involve parents in the education of their children. Links with the wider community, particularly with the business community, though improved, are still not strong.
94. All parents are welcomed into the school, kept well informed about the school's work and their children's progress, and there are consultation meetings to discuss children's progress. Parents appreciate these arrangements, but some would welcome better and more frequent information - for example, more information about what is taught in the cross curricular programme. Progress reports are helpful and inform parents about what their children can do, but do not always tell them clearly what pupils' attainment should be and how this might be achieved. The reports in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are more informative than those at Key Stage 3. Parents of children with special educational needs are closely involved in their children's welfare at school, attend reviews and are kept well informed about their children's progress. There is no specific project to make contact with parents from minority ethnic groups. There are many opportunities for members of the school community to come together socially. Information provided for parents is well presented and informative. The local press is used extensively and effectively to publicise the school.
95. Parents are interested in the education of their children and their involvement in their children's learning at school is at least satisfactory. Many parents participate in initiatives to promote reading strategies and some work as voluntary helpers in the school. The parent-teacher association is active in raising considerable funds for the school's resources, and is a good focus for social activities.
96. There are productive links with the wider community. Strong pastoral links with the main contributory primary schools facilitate transfer arrangements. A number of employers are supportive of the well-organised work experience programme for Year 10 and GNVQ pupils. Some business people are involved in an interesting initiative to mentor Key Stage 4 pupils, and business managers support GNVQ and business education programmes. Pupils have been involved in public speaking competitions and mock trials. Sixth form students contribute to the local community through parties for senior citizens, work in primary schools and a local school for hearing-impaired pupils. Visitors from the local community contribute to activities associated with the cross curricular programme. All of these activities support the curriculum and pupils' personal development; they also contribute towards pupils' understanding of society. Dance, drama and musical productions in public venues and the associated media coverage help to market the school.

### **The management and efficiency of the school**

96. **Leadership and management**



97. The strength of the school's leadership and management was recognised at the time of the last inspection. Since then, the school has developed and changed. The roll has increased by approximately 20%. The curriculum has been re-shaped and the length of the school day extended, so meeting a recommendation of the last inspection. Much work has been done to follow up other key issues identified in 1995. Public test and examination results at Key Stages 3 and 4 have improved at least as rapidly as, and at Key Stage 4 more rapidly than, the national improvement. The improvement has been the result, at least in part, of a clear focus by governors and managers at different levels on the attainment of high standards and the promotion of effective teaching and learning. Targets for improvement in GCSE results have been met and exceeded. The school has enjoyed less success at A-level. The progress made by individual sixth form students has in most subjects been satisfactory, but this is by no means always the case. A review of sixth form provision and performance has been identified as a priority. Work in following up the key issues requiring attention at the time of the last inspection has in almost all respects been energetic, conscientious and effective.
98. In a few respects, possibly, this concern for follow up has dominated school planning to too great a degree. Partly in consequence, some areas that did not emerge as key issues in the last inspection have received insufficient attention – for example links with the community, including industry and commerce, progression from primary schools in literacy and numeracy, review of the school aims, and review of the balance of expenditure on different aspects of the school's provision. Nevertheless, the school has made and is making good progress as a changing and developing institution. Parents readily agree that it has a markedly better reputation than it had in the early 1990s. Increasingly, the school enjoys the full confidence and support of the community it serves.
99. Overall leadership and management are successful in most respects. The headteacher provides strong leadership, based in a firm belief in the potential for improvement of pupils and teachers alike. Great care is taken over the appointment of new staff to the school, and over promotions within it. Responsibilities are delegated widely, and line management arrangements mainly work well. There is a strong sense of teamwork among senior managers, and they fulfil their delegated responsibilities well, although these responsibilities are not evenly distributed across the whole senior management team. Some have much more significant responsibilities than others. Senior managers relate well to one another. School development planning is of high quality and appropriate priorities for short and medium-term development are identified clearly in the school plan, the effectiveness of which is monitored regularly and carefully.
100. Governors support the emphasis on achieving high standards and have a strong interest in the school. Many have long association with it. They provide consistent support for the work of the headteacher and keep the school's finances under careful review. Most make regular, planned visits to the school, they have appropriate links with subject areas, and they play a role in monitoring the school's work and progress. Governors meet almost all their statutory responsibilities. There are exceptions in the provision for religious education and collective worship, and of information and communications technology. The annual report to parents does not contain details of the school's spending on special educational needs. Overall, however, governors play a central role in the school's success.
101. Subject management and leadership are mostly good, and sometimes very good or excellent, except in mathematics, where there are weaknesses. Most faculties and departments, in conjunction with line managers, set targets for improvement, although these are usually focused explicitly on test and examination results, and not to a sufficient extent on other matters, such as approaches to teaching and learning, course completion rates (although there has been improvement in this area at Key Stage 4), and attendance among disaffected or lower-attaining pupils. Most heads of faculty and department realise that they are responsible not only for managing resources but also for managing people. A few are extremely successful in this regard. Pastoral management by heads of year is effective: pupils are very well known and cared-for. Teachers at various levels of responsibility have been encouraged to develop and extend their responsibilities – for example in the creative arts. As a result, many useful initiatives have been introduced.
102. Departmental development planning follows school priorities, and is mainly of good quality and almost

always focused on raising standards of achievement. Departments are expected to monitor their progress in this regard, and most do so carefully, in association with line managers. Day-to-day administration is effective, primarily because of the carefully managed work of administrative, clerical and caretaking staff. The cycle of school meetings at various levels, although demanding for some, is organised appropriately and serves as a useful vehicle for communication, shared decision-making and, for many, in-service training. The majority of teachers are involved regularly in one or more of the numerous working groups formed in response to planning priorities.

103. In some respects, there is insufficient attention in depth to particular initiatives. Because teachers are given much freedom in bringing forward new developments, not all developments are consolidated sufficiently before they are set to one side to make way for a new initiative. This has possibly deflected attention from some central areas, such as the raising of standards in the core subjects and extending initiatives in the teaching of literacy and numeracy, following patterns of good practice already established in many primary schools. Although the school has achieved much, there is a danger that the strategic focus on raising standards in all aspects of the school's life and work will be lost – for example in excessively detailed efforts to improve test and examination results in certain categories because these are the ones which have the greatest market value for the school.
104. Middle management is clearly structured, but a few anomalies persist. In many respects, the faculty system does not have an obvious rationale. The staffing structure includes a number of posts of responsibility that are not essential to the school. The senior management team is, strictly speaking, larger than it needs to be. Overall, there are more posts of responsibility than in most similar schools. Despite these anomalies, the school functions very effectively and has a strong sense of corporate identity.
105. In broad terms, the school implements its aims effectively. However, the aims are in several respects outdated – they do not refer to spiritual or cultural development, for example, and are thin on the curriculum. In consequence, they cannot form a good basis for monitoring and evaluation, and are not the main focus of school development planning. Despite this weakness, much well-targeted monitoring and evaluation is carried out, at both departmental and school levels, and the school is in most respects well aware of its strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan, and its associated departmental development plans, provide a useful vehicle for the monitoring of curriculum development, as does the work of a central and permanent working group on the curriculum. There are well-established arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning, at departmental and school levels. Although these arrangements place too much emphasis on the evaluation of classroom procedures rather than learning outcomes, they have proved a very useful source of in-service training.
106. The school has a clearly-formulated policy for equality of opportunity, of which staff are aware and which most seek to implement consistently. Women are very well represented in senior and middle management leadership positions. There is, however, no member of a minority ethnic group in a senior position in the school. Except in physical education, pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Extensive and profitable work has been done on raising boys' achievement.
107. The learning support department is influential and supportive, for both pupils and staff. Currently, the department is managed on a temporary basis by the former second in the department. Experienced teacher and assistant colleagues ably support her. Systems are sound and the information needed to enable pupils to be provided with appropriate support, are in place.
108. The school's policy for special educational needs is several years' old and has not been reviewed. It does, however, meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. The governing body's representative has first-hand information about the school's approach to special educational needs and reports back formally each year to governors. The senior management team has identified some issues concerning planning in subject areas and its effect on pupils with special educational needs. Two areas, collaborative teaching and differentiation, are appropriate aspects for further development. Too little use has been made so far of close tracking and assessment data, to ensure that the school is addressing the specific needs of all its pupils.

109. The management of the teaching of English as an additional language lacks clarity because there are two co-ordinators who, although they relate well to each other, do not have common objectives or precise targets for improvement. One has the more important role in language development, and the other, who is a teacher in the English department, is concerned primarily with multicultural issues and the monitoring of progress of different groups of pupils. They share responsibilities for the identification and assessment of need, and produce well-informed records for staff. Given the range of need in this area, roles and responsibilities are not defined clearly enough, although senior management supports strongly work in the teaching of English as an additional language. There is no overall co-ordinator with the time and influence to provide a wide range of classroom-based advice and help for support teachers, support assistants, class teachers, and subject managers.

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

**Staffing**

110. The number, qualifications and experience of the staff are satisfactory. There are 70 full-time qualified teachers and 11 part-time qualified teachers. The part-time teachers provide useful flexibility for the management of the timetable as the school grows in size. The pupil to teacher ratio is 18:1, which is above average for comprehensive schools with sixth forms. The figure reduces slightly if account is taken of two instructors, but remains above average. On average, staff teach for 78% of a full time table, close to the national average. Those with responsibility have adequate non-teaching time to fulfil their roles. The balance of age and experience benefits the school. Half the staff have taught for over ten years and a substantial number are relatively recent entrants to the profession who bring to the school new ideas and enthusiasm. Staff turnover in the last two years has been high, with 13 new teachers arriving in September 1999. Staff who have left have done so for promotion or similar reasons. Just over half the teachers have been in the school for fewer than five years, a lower proportion than at the time of the last inspection. As in 1995, the patterns of change are well managed. However, recruitment difficulties in design and technology mean that there are two unqualified teachers in that department. All other staff are suitably qualified and nearly all teach in their specialist areas.

111. There is better match than at the time of the last inspection between the demands of the curriculum and the number, qualifications and experience of educational support staff. Provision of educational support staff is satisfactory except that there is too little support for pupils learning English as an additional language. Technician support is good in art, design and technology and science. The school is well served by its administrative and caretaking staff, who make important contributions to the smooth running of the school and its appearance. There is a full-time librarian who is very committed to the work and well supported by staff and pupils. There is, however, no professional librarian.

112. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are at least satisfactory and in many respects good. The induction of staff new to the school is very effectively organised with a centralised programme and close mentoring by line managers, including classroom observation. There is a comprehensive staff handbook which provides staff with information and clear guidance on school matters. Satisfactory arrangements - co-ordinated by a member of the senior management team - exist to support students undergoing initial teacher training. The school is well placed to provide initial training of good quality.

113. Spending by the school on staff development is in line with the national average. There is an appropriate staff development policy. Much school-based in-service training (INSET) has been organised in the last three years on issues raised in the last inspection, such as the achievement of boys, assessment and recording, target setting and provision for special educational needs and English as an additional language. Careful records are kept of courses attended by staff and each has a professional development portfolio. Provision is good overall. However, the outcomes of school training are not evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in raising standards of teaching and learning. Although a good system exists for establishing priorities in relation to school, departmental and personal training

needs, the evaluation of courses attended by individual teachers will start only in Autumn 1999. In consequence, there is as yet little overall awareness of the quality of training outside school, a criticism raised in the last inspection. There is no appraisal system, although there is well-organised annual monitoring of teachers by senior management and line managers through classroom observation. Some non-teaching staff are not yet systematically involved in staff development, another concern voiced at the time of the last inspection, but there have been definite improvements in this area.

114. Learning support staff for special educational needs are experienced and well-deployed. There are good opportunities for support assistants to take advantage of training and to gain qualifications. All staff in the learning support department are involved in meetings and training as well as offering training for colleagues on a range of issues concerning pupils with special educational needs.
114. **Accommodation**
115. The quality of the accommodation is mostly good in relation to the number of pupils and the needs of the curriculum. The last inspection report highlighted a number of defects. In the years since then, a major building programme has resulted in a much-improved teaching and learning environment. For example, the accommodation for science and drama has been improved and these subjects are now well served. There is an excellent new library, which is large and pleasant and contains good facilities for reading, research and computing. Since the last inspection the accommodation for the learning support department has been enhanced and is now a suitable, pleasant and spacious area with immediate access to the school's resource centre.
116. The information and communications technology rooms are rather cramped and not available frequently enough for booking by other subjects: the school acknowledges the need for another suite for information and communications technology. A small number of lessons in modern languages and business education are taught in overcrowded rooms. Some history lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms which are at a distance from the main suite and therefore difficult to monitor and support. The food technology rooms are in need of refurbishment as the worktables are old and there are some minor health and safety risks from chipped surfaces. Dining facilities have been extended, but are still not large enough for a school of this size.
117. The school organises the use of its split site well. The only adverse effects on learning are in science, where three laboratories are separated from the other seven, causing organisational difficulties and a duplication of resources.
118. There is a good sports hall (except in terms of acoustics), but outdoor facilities for physical education are restricted in that pupils have to travel by bus to nearby playing fields for some lessons, and this significantly reduces the time available for games. The school is planning for the provision of an all-weather surface on the school site. A youth centre on site provides some recreational facilities for pupils at breaks and lunchtime. This would be a valuable resource if it were available on an extended basis.
119. The site is well maintained and there are very good displays of pupils' work, short "mission statements" advocating improvement, "keywords" and relevant published materials in most teaching rooms and in public areas. Outdoors there are pleasant seating areas and litter, although dropped frequently by pupils, is collected regularly.

## **Resources**

120. There has been good improvement in most resources since the last inspection. The quality and quantity of resources for learning are adequate for curriculum requirements, except in information and communications technology. Most departments have sufficient books although in some subjects – for example resistant materials and graphics – books are not up to date. This is also true of various collections in the library, for instance mathematics. There are few music books or publications in the library. English has sufficient textbooks and in modern languages all pupils have their own books. In history there are insufficient differentiated materials for both ends of the attainment range. In modern

languages, as at the time of the last inspection, some overhead projectors need replacing.

121. The library is a large airy room, which is warm and welcoming. There is a good range of fiction, from simple readers to classics. The range of non-fiction is good, and includes reference books, magazines and newspapers. Old stock is being weeded out and new stock brought in. Pupils learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs have a wide and helpful choice of texts, except that there are insufficient dictionaries for pupils learning English. Capitation has been increased and the library is to become a fully-fledged resources centre. The labelling on the shelves is less clear than it might be, but there are plans for better printing in this regard. Sixth formers assist in administration and Year 7 pupils have adopted a shelf to look after. Pupils make good use of the library, which is very busy at times. The loan rate is high and is monitored by use of computers.
122. In a short period the new library has expanded in space and usage and become a very useful source of support for reading, research and private study. There is suite of computers, with CD ROMS and Internet access. Sixth formers are available to support staff and pupils who use the suite. This is a remarkable improvement on the cramped and unsatisfactory provision described in the last report. The LEA has describes the present library as a role model for others to emulate.
123. The pupil to computer ratio, at 10:1, is well below the national average of 7:1, and is not sufficient to support the curriculum. Many departments are not able to gain easy access to computers because the computer rooms and library are booked for 60% of the time. Suitable software for some departments, including music and religious education, is in short supply. The computers in modern languages are ageing and have a different operating system from those in the rest of the school. Pupils with special educational needs are not well supported with specific hardware and software. Pupils make very good use of the computers in the information and communications technology rooms and library during lunchtimes and after school.
124. The school makes good use of resources beyond the school itself to support pupils' learning. Science uses the Epping Forest Centre and arranges visits to the Science Museum. History organises trips to the Commonwealth Institute, World War 1 battlefield sites, and the Army Museum. Geography provides a good range of field trips. Pupils visit a Jewish Synagogue, a Mosque and a Hindu Temple as part of their studies in religious education. The school make frequent use of the Redbridge Drama Centre and schools library service.
125. Resources for special educational needs are just adequate, except for computers. Good support materials are made by the learning support teachers, both for subject departments and for individual pupils, but, overall, there is insufficient choice and variety of schemes. The department has one new computer and occasional access to the resource centre, but this is inadequate for the needs of these pupils, many of whom would benefit greatly from better access to information and communications technology.

### **The efficiency of the school**

126. Few significant weaknesses in efficiency were identified at the time of the last inspection. Governors and senior managers have been largely successful in dealing with the areas singled out for attention.
127. Financial control and school administration are well managed. Roles are clearly defined and budgets well organised and monitored by a deputy head and the senior member of the non-teaching staff. The governors' finance committee meets regularly to oversee financial matters and monitor expenditure. The most recent auditors' report confirms that, with a few minor exceptions, controls are operating effectively. Specific grants are used for the purposes intended. Funds for staff development are used carefully, for purposes that, in the main, match the priorities of development planning. Monthly turn-out statements have been introduced to enable subject departments to check their own spending. Money is allocated to departments on the basis of an appropriate formula, with some additional distribution in response to bids for particular developmental purposes. Departments are expected to carry out regular evaluations of the effectiveness of their spending decisions. Day-to-day administration is good. The smooth running of the school and the high standards of maintenance owe

much to the careful work of administrative, clerical and caretaking staff.

128. Much thought is given to financial planning. The school identifies clear priorities linked carefully to its intentions for future development. Budgeting is based on accurate information and the school ensures that available monies are used purposefully. An “underspend” is, appropriately, being maintained at present in view of the probability that money allocated to the school in 1996 will have to be repaid to the LEA.
129. Staff are generally well deployed: good use is made of their specialist expertise, and those who teach outside their subject receive appropriate support. As at the time of the last inspection, there are imaginative and cost-effective features in the deployment of staff. For example, some good use is made of responsibility allowances to stimulate new initiatives, aid recruitment and reward teachers on a temporary basis for particular tasks. In the main, the distribution of non-contact time matches teachers’ different needs, whether managerial or developmental.
130. Planning for accommodation needs as the school grows in size has been and is excellent. A great deal of improvement has been achieved, and the school has successfully identified and exploited potential sources of funding for this. There are, nevertheless, continuing inadequacies in accommodation - for example in the limited dining accommodation and the restricted outdoor facilities for sport and games – but the school is seeking improvement in these areas. Extensive changes to the curriculum and the staffing to support it have been introduced since the last inspection, and this has contributed to rising standards. In order to maintain a full academic and growing vocational curriculum in the sixth form, some funding is deflected from Key Stage 4, which leads to some over-sized classes in Year 11, but the school sees this as a price worth paying to maintain its post-16 provision. The school has increased the provision of learning resources and ensured that the use of resources is monitored. The library has been improved out of all recognition, and work is proceeding to increase departmental use of this valuable resource.
131. Despite the good quality of most financial planning, there are weaknesses. There are continuing and serious shortages in provision for information and communications technology. The costing of initiatives in the school development plan often lacks necessary detail. The allocation of responsibility allowances among teaching staff needs to be reviewed, since present patterns are in a few respects difficult to justify in terms of work done. The management and administrative responsibilities carried out by members of the senior management team are uneven. The same is true of heads of faculty where work beyond their subject is concerned. The allowances allocated to a few teachers in subsidiary management positions are not justified by the work they are expected to do. The structures are, therefore, not fair in all respects, although the school has plans for improvement as staffing circumstances allow. The budget for special educational needs is not always used to best effect. For example, in some instances, the support in the classroom provided by qualified teachers might be carried out as successfully by learning support assistants. Expenditure on special educational needs, although carefully planned and conscientiously controlled, lacks precision in monitoring, and governors do not report details of spending in this area to parents. It is important to recognise, however, that the school does not spend an excessive proportion of its budget on staffing. Nevertheless, the balance of expenditure on different aspects of the school’s work would repay further review. In particular, the need for, and effects of, the large class sizes in Key Stage 4 should be evaluated in greater detail, as should the cost-effectiveness of the sixth form provision in its present form.
132. Despite the areas requiring review, the present arrangements generally work well. This is an effective school.
133. The cost of educating each pupil is well above average. The sixth form, in particular, is expensive. However, because of the improving standards in most subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the good ethos and relationships, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **English, mathematics and science**

#### **English**

134. Pupils make satisfactory progress to the end of Key Stage 3, except for some learning English as an additional language who receive insufficient support. Results in the National Curriculum tests were close to the national average in 1998, an improvement over the previous two years and higher than expected. They fell in 1999, but are still higher than in 1996 and 1997. The standard in the last few years has been close to the average for similar comprehensive schools.
135. High attainers at Key Stage 4 advance quite well to GCSE, but progress for others is slow. Boys have begun to make better progress than was the case at the time of the last inspection. In GCSE English in 1998, results at grades A\*-C were below the national average, and well below in English literature. They are not as high as they should be and dropped lower in 1999, when there was an increase in the number of pupils learning English as an additional language. In the sixth form, students build successfully on their GCSE results and make good progress towards A-level. Results in A-level English are in line with national averages and all pupils passed in 1999. Higher grades (A, B) are not as numerous as they should be. A new A-level in media studies has made a good start with all candidates passing.
136. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils can speak clearly and confidently and use standard English. They are able to read aloud from their own work with lively expression. Improvisation in drama lessons enhances their confidence. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and each other, and are quick to recall what they have learnt. At Key Stage 4, pupils exchange ideas readily in group situations but are less assured in formal presentations before the whole class. Play reading is expressively done. At A-level, students volunteer their opinions and speak intelligently in discussion. They show good concentration in their listening.
137. Reading is generally competent. In Key Stage 3, pupils progress well through their novels, poetry, and plays. High attainers are fluent and choose challenging texts for their personal reading. Low attainers make broadly satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 4, pupils are reading Shakespeare and poetry with increased understanding. Personal reading includes the classics but sometimes can be unchallenging. At A-level, students show good understanding of difficult texts, in prose and verse, and make good progress in their appreciation of literature.
138. Writing skills vary quite widely. At Key Stage 3, writing by high attainers is accurate, expressive, and neat. Low attainers can be fluent but are hampered by poor spelling, limited sentence structure and vocabulary, and untidy handwriting. Most pupils learn how to re-draft their work, but not enough of them are skilled in word-processing. There is some very weak writing by pupils with special educational needs or who are learning English as an additional language. Some folders of work are not as full as they should be by the end of the key stage. At Key Stage 4, high attainers continue their progress with more extensive writing and imaginative use of vocabulary. Lower attainers' progress is often limited by poor paragraphing and spelling. A-level writing is well developed, and at the highest level is fluent and perceptive.
139. Almost all the teaching is satisfactory or better, and one third is good. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge. They do not always have high enough expectations of pupils. At Key Stage 3, the use of questioning to stimulate thought and extend vocabulary, and of dialogue, is limited. At Key Stage 4, tasks are sometimes pitched too low. Sixth form work has appropriate challenge. Overall, planning is good and shows clear progression of learning. Methods incorporate whole class, group, and individual work as appropriate. Exposition is mostly clear, but pupils are not given enough chances for oral work. Where used, it is effectively done, as in reading aloud, play scripts, and regular dialogue. Tasks are not varied enough to suit different pupils' needs. Silent reading time is a disciplined and reflective start, but can eat into the main activity of the lesson and is often unrelated to

further work and lacks monitoring. Teaching in the sixth form involves a better balance of oral and written work. Discipline in class is of a high order. Teachers are punctual and vigilant and manage pupils with tact and firmness. Pupils respond positively to different topics and co-operate well in group work. The best lessons are well timed and structured, with good use of resources. Assessment of progress is detailed and helpful. Marking is regular and includes useful comments. Homework is well used to advance learning.

140. Since the last inspection, there has been some improvement in standards at Key Stage 3, but GCSE results have not progressed as well as they should. Leadership of the department is strong on policy-making and analysis. The translation of objectives into classroom practice through a consistent scheme of work has not been achieved thoroughly. Nor is teaching consistently monitored. Schemes of work are being revised and their co-ordination needs urgent attention. Staff are well qualified, with a good balance of youth and experience, but co-operation across the department is not as productive as it should be. Development planning lacks impact and does not give enough priority to the raising of standards by more effective practice.

### **Spoken English and literacy**

141. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory across the school and most pupils know how to use Standard English. At Key Stage 3, most pupils speak clearly and confidently, with good examples of expression in drama and religious education. They learn to use technical vocabulary in subjects like music and design and technology. In modern foreign languages, speaking is spontaneous and enthusiastic. At Key Stage 4, pupils communicate well in group work, especially in history and English. They are less confident in formal presentations to the whole class. Sixth formers speak intelligently in discussion and are able to expand their arguments, whether on A-level or GNVQ courses. Throughout the school, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and follow up what they are told. They show respect for the opinions of fellow pupils.
142. Literacy maintains a satisfactory standard. Most pupils can read and understand the specialist texts of different subjects. Some pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language have great difficulty in coping with the language and ideas of subjects. Plays, novels and poetry are appreciated and enjoyed at all key stages. Research skills are particularly strong in history and science. The amount of reading varies widely, but personal reading is encouraged and high attainers read a fair number of books. Reading for pleasure is given a boost by a well-equipped library which is regularly used. Sixth formers are able to cope with a wide range of challenging texts.
143. Writing is often limited to short factual answers, but most pupils are able to write creatively and at length in English, history, and science. High attainers throughout the school and A-level students develop a variety of styles, from note-making to polished essays, but those with special educational needs have a very narrow range. Word processing is not used as much as it should be. Pupils at Key Stage 3 are often be unsure of how to structure and paragraph their work, but this improves higher up the school. Likewise, vocabulary increases and technical words are more common. Punctuation and spelling are sometimes a major problem for low and average attainers, but most are able to improve their accuracy by re-drafting. Handwriting by most pupils is neat and legible.

### **Mathematics**

144. Attainment in Key Stage 3 national tests is below the national average and the average for similar schools, although standards have improved since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 or better is close to the national average, but the proportion reaching higher levels is below average. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results are below the national average and generally below the results of other subjects in the school, though there has been a steady improvement over the last three years. In 1999, girls' results significantly exceeded those for boys, but usually results are similar for boys and girls. In the sixth form, A-level results are broadly in line with the national average. A-level results compare satisfactorily with those in other subjects.
145. In Key Stage 3 lessons, attainment is very slightly below national expectations. Most pupils have a



good understanding of shape and space and their number skills are improving, though a minority have not fully mastered the basic rules of number that are needed for mental arithmetic. Attainment in Key Stage 4 lessons is on average below national expectations. In trigonometry, higher-attaining pupils cope well, but some intermediate pupils are unsuccessful in applying methods they have learned. In A-level lessons, standards are in line with expectations for the course, although some students find difficulty in using previously learned techniques in new situations.

146. Pupils' progress is almost always satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and where it is unsatisfactory it is because the teaching is insufficiently challenging or there is too much repetition of work studied previously. Progress is less satisfactory at Key Stage 4, and in a significant minority of lessons is unsatisfactory because of an over-reliance on published textbooks that are not wholly suited to pupils' needs. Pupils repeat their mistakes when teaching does not include a clear discussion of their difficulties.
147. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Key Stage 3 when they have in-class support, and in other circumstances their progress is broadly satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 they are often placed in very small classes and because of this make satisfactory progress.
148. In A-level lessons, progress is in general satisfactory and is good in those lessons that are clearly presented and build carefully on earlier studies. In the sixth form GCSE course, progress is just satisfactory overall. Progress in this course is enhanced by a well-organised programme of work, but hampered by timetable arrangements that prevent some students from attending lessons regularly.
149. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate well, form constructive relationships and help each other. However, there are too few opportunities in lessons for pupils to show initiative. A small number of higher-attaining pupils are given additional individual challenges: these pupils organise themselves well and benefit from this.
150. At Key Stage 3 all the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and just over half was good. At Key Stage 4, three-quarters was satisfactory and a quarter unsatisfactory. All the sixth form teaching seen was satisfactory. Teachers have a sound knowledge of mathematics. They are supportive of pupils and manage them well. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and concentration, but their expectations are usually too low in requiring pupils to think about and discuss mathematical concepts and apply them to new situations. In consequence, basic misunderstandings are not always tackled, and, with higher attainers, thinking at the highest level is not developed.
151. Teachers plan their work adequately. Although teaching methods are broadly satisfactory overall, they too often consist of a very short explanation, with minimal questioning, followed by routine exercises. Progress is limited by the lack of variety in the teaching methods, and of pupil interaction in lessons. Opportunities to use mental arithmetic are sometimes missed. On the few occasions pupils explain their understanding to each other, this results in good learning. In the best lessons, pupils' achievements are celebrated with praise and discussion. This does not happen often. At present, mathematics lessons are rarely exciting or inspiring. Marking is done regularly, with encouraging and occasionally constructive comments. Homework is set regularly and tackled positively by pupils.
152. There is an adequate number of qualified mathematics teachers. Though the induction of new teachers is good, the leadership of the department is not satisfactory. Departmental policies are in place, but are not sufficiently detailed to provide teachers with the support they need to achieve the highest standards. Departmental targets are too cautious and are insufficiently focused on raising achievement. The system of pupil assessment has recently been improved, but it is still incomplete and the process of monitoring teaching is under-developed.
153. There is insufficient systematic analysis of assessment data, setting of challenging but realistic targets at all key stages, and planning that is clearly focused on strategies to achieve the targets. Two urgent priorities for the department are the monitoring of pupils' progress through departmental assessment, and the improvement of teaching through monitoring, in-service training and the sharing of good practice.

154. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have improved at Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching has improved at Key Stage 3. Marking is now done consistently and attention has been given to extending some higher-attaining pupils, but there is still a need for the sharing of successful teaching approaches and techniques. The use of computers as an integral part of mathematics has improved at Key Stage 3 but is still under-developed. Although resources for information and communications technology have been increased they remain inadequate. The time allocated to mathematics in Year 7 is now sufficient. There are now satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use numbers across the curriculum and pupils are generally able to apply their skills to the numerical needs of other subjects.

154. **Numeracy**

155. Standards of numeracy have improved since the last inspection through increased attention to this area. At Key Stage 3, for example, staged arithmetic tests have been introduced to encourage the development of number skills. Pupils' mental and written methods for arithmetic are improving, but some pupils still rely too much on calculators and some others take too long to reach an answer.

156. Pupils are generally able to apply their skills to the numerical needs of other subjects. At Key Stage 3, they use formulae in science, grid references and scales in geography, and in art they use scales to enlarge and reduce drawings. They weigh and measure in design and technology and use graphs in geography and history. The science and mathematics departments have jointly produced a handbook for Year 7 pupils containing guidance on mathematical skills. In information and communications technology, opportunities are not always taken for the application of estimating skills to check results of calculations.

157. In GCSE courses, pupils use more sophisticated statistical techniques in geography, they produce accurate working drawings in design and technology (graphic products) and in GNVQ business studies they follow a course in the application of number. Students following A-level courses apply a range of formulae in physics and use statistical analysis in business education.

**Science**

158. Attainment in science is in line with national averages in Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form except in A-level chemistry where it is below average.

159. Attainment in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1998 was well below both the national average and the average for similar schools. However, results have improved since the last inspection more rapidly than the national improvement. Boys and girls attain similar levels. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils understand the difference between compounds and mixtures and higher-attaining pupils can identify elements and their numbers, given the formulae of compounds. Very few, however, go on to higher levels, for example balancing equations. Lower-attaining pupils make up simple electromagnets and confidently test their strength using paper clips. Most pupils can link types of exercise to their effects, understanding, for example, how weight lifting exercises make the body stronger. Most can name microbes and know some of their harmful and beneficial effects.

160. All pupils are entered for double award GCSE science. In 1998, the results were below the national average, and similar to those in 1997. Girls' performance was slightly higher than boys'. Results improved significantly in 1999. Most pupils understand how total internal reflection takes place in water waves and glass blocks and appreciate its application in glass fibres. They can explain in clear scientific terms how asexual and sexual reproduction takes place in strawberry plants and appreciate the application of this in agriculture.

161. The proportion of students attaining higher grades at A-level in 1998 was good in biology and physics, but not in chemistry. However, overall pass rates were generally in line with national figures in all three sciences. Results declined in 1999 in all A-levels reflecting, in part, the earlier GCSE performance of that year group. The chemistry A-level results were the lowest. Standards in the lessons seen reflected the overall order of performance in examinations. In GNVQ science results were poor: only a small number of students gained a pass grade in all units. A/S science in the environment

was introduced September 1999 as a sixth form option. Students are making satisfactory progress in this course.

162. Information and communications technology is used well by pupils of all abilities to store, display and retrieve information. Data logging is used effectively to measure changes in temperature, light, oxygen and movement.
163. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the applications of science in medicine, agriculture and genetics, as appropriate to their age. Many appreciate the implications of science in relation to health, pollution and conservation.
164. The very good programme of liaison with primary schools contributes effectively to progression between Key Stages 2 and 3, and sets good standards for pupils coming into the science department. Pupils start Year 7 with attainment broadly in line with national standards. During Key Stage 3 they gain knowledge of science at a satisfactory rate. However, their progress in acquiring the skills of analysis and evaluating investigations is slower than in learning scientific principles.
165. During Key Stage 4 they make good progress because of good teaching. Many pupils gain the knowledge and understanding to achieve well in modular tests and course work. A-level students learn to perform experiments well beyond GCSE standards, for example preparing aspirin using a reflux condenser and proper synthetic procedures. Progress in A-level physics and biology is satisfactory, but not in GNVQ intermediate science or A-level chemistry. The department has recognised these shortcomings and put in place changes that should improve progress. Lessons observed in these groups indicate that students do not take sufficient responsibility for their work.
166. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they are helped by support staff or taught in an appropriate way in small groups. For example, in a well-designed data-handling exercise they applied effectively their understanding of electro-magnets. Pupils at early stages of learning English as an additional language make insufficient progress when not supported with appropriate materials. The “flexible learning units” are particularly good in promoting learning for lower-attaining pupils because these pupils are enabled to choose their own route through well-planned material.
167. Pupils always behave well. They are attentive and often answer questions well. All pupils handle equipment with care and work co-operatively in groups. They are safety conscious and understand risk assessment. Take up rates in the A-level groups fluctuate considerably for many reasons largely outside the control of the department. Towards the end of Years 9 and 11 many pupils attend revision sessions in their own time. Some pupils in Key Stage 4 and students at A-level develop good skills of independent study. They use computers and library books effectively for independent research.
168. Teaching is at least satisfactory, is good or better in over half the lessons, and is very good in a quarter. This is a good profile overall. All teachers maintain good discipline and have constructive relations with pupils, so ensuring that learning takes place. Planning and expectations are good in the majority of lessons, as are organisational strategies. In some of the satisfactory lessons, however, there is too much talk by the teacher and the pace tends to be slow. Features of the very good teaching include great enthusiasm combined with good use of practical activities or exciting demonstrations, and very clear exposition. Good pace and high expectations are also features of such lessons. All teachers implement a well-designed marking policy, but not all use information from it to plan future lessons.
169. Schemes of work are good and curriculum changes have led to the development of appropriate courses at all levels. Technical support is now sufficient and of high quality. The number and quality of laboratories have improved, but they are situated in three separate locations and technicians have to move certain items of heavy equipment between them. The quality of display in classrooms and corridors is very good and celebrates both the wonder and applications of science. Pupils have enough textbooks and there is good planning for extending the use of computers. The department constitutes a good team, effectively led. Time for in-service training is used well to share expertise such as use of computers, but is not exploited as effectively as it should be in the sharing of a broad range of teaching

strategies.

170. Since the last inspection boys' attainment has improved at both key stages. Attainment is now monitored by ethnicity also. Behaviour has improved: pupils settle down quickly to lessons. Teaching has improved overall, as has the quality of marking. However, there continues to be some unhelpful variation in the extent to which pupils are challenged, and in the use of homework to extend learning. Technicians are better integrated in consultative procedures and requisitioning arrangements are tighter. The quality of resources, including computers and software, has improved, and pupils use textbooks well in many lessons.

## Other subjects or courses

### Art

171. Art is a popular subject and standards of attainment have risen since the last inspection.
172. Some pupils' attainment on entry is broadly in line with national expectations, but is below for the majority. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment for the majority meets national expectations and for some is above. During the key stage, pupils learn about painting, drawing, simple printing and pattern work, together with three-dimensional work using a range of materials including clay. Pupils' use of colour, line and tone is developed alongside their knowledge of a range of artwork from different cultures. Pupils can work at a variety of scales and respond to a range of subject matter, including the work of artists, and learn to evaluate their artwork. For example, Year 7 pupils used pencil and pastels to make detailed large-scale drawings of plants, whilst Year 8 pupils were at the early stages of evaluating preparatory work on the topic of personal identity. Pupils use a sketchbook to record observations and develop ideas. A very small minority make use of information and communications technology in their work.
173. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is well above the national average. 1998 GCSE examination results were high in comparison with results in similar schools and nationally. The 1999 examination results present a similar picture and the current work in Key Stage 4 reflects these high standards. Girls' GCSE results are better than boys', as is the case nationally. However, in recent years the gap between boys and girls has narrowed steadily. The quality of drawing and observation work is especially good in the present Year 11. Pupils can record what they observe with increasing confidence, handling a range of subject matter. In a Year 10 class, for example, pupils basing their work on the style of an artist had produced bold and expressive self-portraits using a range of media. A Year 11 group were able to make good preparatory figure drawings as part of card sculpture work. Pupils can discuss their work as it becomes more individual and expressive, and relate this to the work of artists. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress.
174. In the sixth form, students follow either an A-level course or GNVQ art and design. 1998 A-level results were well above national averages. Three of the four GNVQ students gained distinctions. Provisional A-level results for 1999 indicate that standards have remained high. Students, particularly those in the A-level groups, show high levels of commitment, and the current Year 13 A-level work is of a high standard, with imaginative personal work developed in many cases from competent observational studies and more independent research of the work of artists. For example, one student had explored the content of dreams through painting and drawing and had linked this with studies of surrealist and expressionist art.
175. During Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils make good progress. Their practical skills and knowledge are developed progressively and applied to a wide range of subject matter. The best progress is in Key Stage 4 where pupils build rapidly on the solid foundation of Key Stage 3. Good teacher intervention to suggest clear targets ensures that students of all abilities can make progress in lessons. Pupils' knowledge and awareness of the social and cultural aspects of art is also widened progressively through discussion, visits to galleries, work with visiting artists and exhibitions of work in the local community. Sixth form students make good progress.
176. Pupils respect and value their environment and the equipment they use. They behave very well, are enthusiastic and concentrate well. Sketchbooks and folders show they often take great care with their work. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form develop increasingly mature and independent attitudes to their learning.
177. The teaching is never less than satisfactory, and most is at least good, with a significant number of very good lessons. The best teaching is in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, where it has a major impact on the attainment of all pupils. All teachers have good specialist knowledge and use departmental schemes of work that are well planned with clear objectives. Teachers use the resources well and often provide stimulating displays to support their lessons. Good verbal comment, intervention and

particularly well-focused discussion of work are features of the most successful lessons. In a minority of cases, insufficient consideration is given to the time and structure of the lesson and how these are to be matched to the needs of pupils. For example, planning in a few of the lessons seen at Key Stage 3 had not considered how the learning could be broken down into more manageable tasks, particularly for the lower attainers. Teachers make appropriate use of homework to support learning, but do not plan opportunities for pupils to use information and communications technology. Teaching in the sixth form sets high expectations for students to work independently and develop their personal study skills.

178. The leadership of the department is strong and provides excellent vision that is shared by staff through their teaching. Effective focus upon the monitoring of progress has raised standards. The department has clear and manageable systems for planning and assessment of work. Reports to parents are clear and informative. Art makes a valuable contribution to the work of the school, and through the use of displays and effective technician support provides an environment in which pupils can achieve. There has recently been a fifty per cent turnover of staff as a result of promotion, and the challenge now facing the head of department is to be able to give sufficient time to supporting and monitoring new specialist staff, and to the maintenance of high standards.

### **Business Studies**

179. Attainment in business studies at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. The proportion of pupils achieving each grade at GCSE in 1998 was very close to the national pattern. The proportion of pupils that achieved at least a grade C was only marginally lower than the national figure. The performance of boys and girls was broadly similar. Similar standards were maintained in the provisional results for 1999. In the GNVQ business intermediate course, completion rates are comparable with national figures. In 1998, three-quarters of students passed, and the majority of those who passed gained merits. One gained a distinction. Performance in A-level business studies is satisfactory, results being broadly in line with national expectations for the course. In 1998, all students achieved pass grades.
180. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the concepts underpinning the subject. Their written work shows a satisfactory grasp of theory and some ability to apply it. Year 10 pupils, having just started the course, are able to show some understanding of the structure of economic behaviour and basic knowledge of different types of business ownership. One Year 11 business studies group was able to distinguish between agreed and contested mergers with the higher attainers using appropriate business terminology in response to questioning. Most pupils could use their knowledge of the theory of growth and apply it to some degree to the case study being used, that was the development of Stagecoach. Ethnic minority pupils perform well in business studies and those learning English as an additional language are supported effectively to achieve their potential.
181. Sixth form students show a competent level of understanding of the more complex concepts and are able to relate their knowledge to current examples. Discussions on unemployment illustrated a depth of knowledge appropriate to that of students early in Year 13. In paired debate as well as class discussions, they were able to use business terminology and apply it accurately to unemployment theory. In one lesson the students were required to make a presentation about the impact of disaster or shock on business. These presentations were prepared competently and delivered effectively to the others in the class, whose questions showed a satisfactory understanding of appropriate business studies theory.
182. In the Part 1 GNVQ business course, Year 10 pupils have made a good start and are beginning to understand the approach required for successful completion of assignments. They have a good initial knowledge of business ownership and the different industrial sectors. Pupils in Year 11 have portfolios which reflect the required standards, and show a sound understanding of business theory, and satisfactory performance in the key skills. GNVQ students in Years 11 and 12 make good use of the available resources to carry out their research. They are confident in the use of information and communications technology to enhance their portfolios.
183. In Key Stage 4, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.

They consolidate their knowledge and understanding and apply it well to business and economic problems. On entering the courses they have little background in the topics to be considered. However, the pupils take on the subject content competently and make progress at a satisfactory rate. Most are able, with relative ease, to recall earlier learning. In questioning, Year 10 pupils were able to draw on their established knowledge to distinguish between the different types of ownership and define limited liability.

184. Progress in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students in Year 13 were able to draw on their earlier learning to contribute to discussion of the effects on business of the Taiwanese earthquake, recognising the factors that would indicate loss and gain, and drawing on knowledge of the “multiplier” effect. They demonstrated the ability to reinforce their learning by reference to relevant texts and current articles. Their work showed evidence of successful independent study.
185. The majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 have a mature approach to their work, show interest in the subject, work well with each other, and also independently. GCSE pupils are able to question constructively, and use knowledge of current events to develop discussions. However, a minority of pupils at Key Stage 4 occasionally disrupt lessons. GNVQ students are developing organisational skills that enable them to produce effective action plans and meet deadlines in line with the requirements of the course. Students on A-level courses show skills of critical analysis when dealing with data and readily engage in discussion with their peers and the teaching staff.
186. Teaching in business studies was satisfactory in every lesson seen but one. In this lesson, the teaching was unsatisfactory because of uncertain control of the pupils which limited learning for the class as a whole. The planning of courses and lessons is generally good, and resources, content and methodology are mostly appropriate to the requirements of the programmes followed. In the best lessons, the pace is good, relationships are secure, and the work is pitched at a level that motivates every pupil. In weaker lessons, pupils are set tasks that do not challenge them sufficiently: they are provided with information rather than being allowed to become critical thinkers applying their knowledge. Teachers have a good knowledge of the requirements of students with special educational needs and of those learning English as an additional language. Support for pupils in these categories is usually good, but insufficient thought is given to the provision for low attainers.
187. The courses followed for GCSE and A-level are well resourced, and good use is made of the business community through visits and activities - for example a recent competition involving a large financial services company and the local Education Business Partnership. Effective use is made of the work experience programme, particularly by those following the Part 1 GNVQ. Planning ensures that students at both key stages make good use of local resources and current examples of business practice. The department is well managed by a head of subject who is also responsible for co-ordinating GNVQ across the school. Monitoring of staff within the department and co-ordinating the work of staff across other vocational areas is a demanding task. This role is, however, performed effectively. Information and communications technology is well used in the department: students have good access to the equipment and competent staff to assist them. The base rooms provide adequate space for most groups. However, the popularity of the subject has created some large GCSE classes.

### **Design and Technology**

188. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations. Girls, however, reach higher standards than boys. Standards in lessons during the inspection were satisfactory in making products in food, textiles, resistant materials, systems and control, and graphics. Pupils’ design and decision-making skills were less secure, although higher-attaining pupils reached a satisfactory standard in this area. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, higher-attaining pupils were able to discuss and compare different mechanisms as they started to design a mechanical toy that they were to go on to make. Standards in written work are sometimes unsatisfactory in quality and quantity, and written work is not always well presented. Written work is better in resistant materials, graphics and systems and control, where pupils’ writing is supported by the use of booklets. Many pupils can talk about their work, using correct technical terms when doing so.

189. The 1998 GCSE results were in line with national averages overall; they were well above average in textiles and well below in food technology. Child development results were in line with national averages, but catering results were well below. In general, pupils' results in GCSE design and technology subjects have in recent years compared well with the results they have achieved in other subjects. Pupils who take catering also achieve the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate. During the key stage higher-attaining pupils are well able to produce a design specification, with criteria against which they can evaluate their product. Numeracy skills are enhanced, particularly in graphics, as pupils measure and calculate angles accurately. Higher-attaining pupils develop good research techniques outside of their immediate environment, but for other pupils research skills are limited.
190. Attainment at the higher grades in A-level in 1998 was below the national average, but broadly in line with students' prior attainment at GCSE. In 1999, the A-level results in design and technology did not compare well with results in other subjects. In A-level lessons, students develop sound analytical skills as they define areas for their major projects and then carry out individual research before developing design specifications. Students use information and communications technology as well as developing good techniques to enhance the presentation of their work. Four students completed GNVQ intermediate in hospitality and catering in 1999, with one student gaining a merit. This is the first year of entry.
191. Progress in the contributing subjects at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory for all pupils including those with special educational needs. Pupils learn to work with different materials and use tools and equipment competently. In Key Stage 4, progress is also satisfactory for all pupils as they consolidate and apply practical skills and knowledge learned during Key Stage 3. They become more independent in their choice of design and in practical work. Higher-attaining pupils in textiles and graphics make satisfactory progress in achieving the higher GCSE grades. Students in the sixth form generally make satisfactory progress in line with their prior attainment.
192. At both key stages and in the sixth form courses, pupils show interest in designing and making and concentrate well in class. Their behaviour is good as they use potentially dangerous tools and equipment safely and appropriately. Pupils work very well together in practical rooms and there is a good rapport between pupils and teachers.
193. Teaching varies from unsatisfactory to very good, with the better teaching in Key Stage 4, but the teaching is predominantly satisfactory at both key stages and in the sixth form. A few teachers do not yet have secure knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach, but the school is providing support where necessary. Where the teaching is good or very good (as it is in a third of lessons overall), and in many of the satisfactory lessons also, the work is well planned with a range of tasks, and teachers have high expectations of pupils' attainment and progress. In these lessons teachers use questions well, targeting them precisely in order to make pupils think for themselves. These features were missing in the tenth of lessons that were unsatisfactory. In these lessons, higher-attaining pupils were not challenged sufficiently, and in consequence made little progress. Marking across the contributing subjects is of mixed quality although mainly satisfactory and occasionally good. In the best marking, pupils are given constructive help as well as targets to aim at. Relationships between staff and pupils are always good and there is a good atmosphere for learning in lessons.
194. Leadership in design and technology is good. Pupils are given a broad and balanced curriculum at Key Stage 3. However, the department has not developed the use of information and communications technology sufficiently to support pupils' learning. The accommodation for resistant materials and graphics is very pleasant and promotes good standards. By contrast, the food rooms are in need of some refurbishment. Continuing difficulties in staff recruitment for design and technology mean that there are some unqualified teachers and other staff teaching in areas for which they are not qualified. Over time this is having a negative effect on standards, particularly in food technology.
195. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Class sizes have been reduced to provide manageable numbers. Booklets, instead of worksheets, are being produced in conjunction with the learning support department, in order to provide better help for pupils; some of these have extension tasks to take learning forward for the more able pupils. Managerial roles have been clarified, although



the layout of the school still makes contacts between the different areas difficult. The vocational course in catering has been extended to become a GNVQ.

## **Drama**

196. Drama is a separate subject throughout Key Stage 3 and is a popular GCSE option at Key Stage 4. Theatre studies is an established A-level subject in the sixth form. Drama is part of the creative arts faculty and is staffed separately from English.
197. GCSE results are consistently above national averages, and compare very well with results in other subjects. A-level results have varied, and the relatively small numbers involved make comparisons with national figures unreliable. Nevertheless, results have improved and the pass rates are good. The 1999 results compare well with results in other A-level subjects. The department has identified A-level improvement as a priority.
198. Pupils enter the school with very little previous experience of drama, but they settle quickly to the subject, and grow in self-discipline. As a result of capable teaching built on very good relationships with the pupils, thorough knowledge of the subject and clear guidance in the schemes of work, pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3. By the end of the key stage, attainment is above national expectations. Lessons are carefully planned, purposeful and almost always well managed. Teachers have clear objectives for pupils' development in improvisation, understanding and self-evaluation, which they usually explain to pupils both at the beginning of the lesson and as it progresses. Pupils learn to work in pairs and groups and to plan, execute and evaluate simple improvisations. Most develop a sound knowledge of dramatic techniques and terminology. The central departmental aim that all pupils should attain some success is generally realised: in the lessons observed it was very difficult to distinguish from the others, pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. There are no obvious differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Some Year 9 pupils are very articulate and inventive. Although lower attainers have relatively limited oral skills and find it difficult to adopt roles convincingly, the higher attainers are decisive in preparing improvisations, and can control movement very well and use mime and body language to good advantage. They project their voices effectively. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils showed themselves able to draw on specialist terminology correctly, and use dramatic concepts to evaluate their own progress accurately.
199. By the time they embark on the Key Stage 4 GCSE course, pupils have a good basis in technique and in understanding the conventions of educational drama. They bring with them from Key Stage 3 good levels of self-discipline and application to the tasks set. They build successfully on these strengths. Drama at Key Stage 4 is mostly of high quality in imaginative planning, characterisation, voice projection and use of facial expression and control of movement. Pupils' evaluations of their own and others' work are generally perceptive, considerate and clearly expressed. Good work was seen in Year 11 when pupils made effective use of voice, stance and movement in preparing improvisations and "freeze frames" on the theme of images of "heaven and hell". The pupils' use of space and "levels" and facial expression were good for their age. Key Stage 4 lessons are well orchestrated, and activities so devised that all pupils are engaged and enabled to make good progress. Control is secure and almost all lessons move at a good pace.
200. The teaching is predominantly good. An occasional weakness in the teaching in the lessons seen in both key stages was a tendency (which was most obvious in Key Stage 3) for teachers to over-orchestrate and dominate pupils' responses, or to explain new work at too great a length. When this happened, pupils' progress was restricted because of lack of time to reflect, ask and answer questions, experiment, evaluate and explain.
201. In terms of practical work, standards in the sixth form lessons seen were above expectations for the course. Students maintain the good progress in performance and understanding that characterises work in Key Stage 4. However, some have considerable difficulty in adapting satisfactorily to the more academic demands of the A-level course. Work in students' folders shows that their writing is not as strong as their practical work. Although students make satisfactory progress in learning to organise

evidence and present arguments convincingly, their writing lacks sophistication and ease, and occasionally accuracy, weaknesses that are pertinent in view of the reading and writing demands of the course the school chooses to follow at A-level.

202. Sixth form teaching is very competent, and students' attitudes to the work extremely positive. Assessment by the teacher and the students themselves becomes increasingly analytical. In the sixth form years as in the main school, drama makes a central contribution to pupils' personal development and, through an ambitious range of extra-curricular activities, to the life of the school as a whole.
203. Strengths identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. The subject is very well led. Drama has benefited greatly from specialist accommodation provided through the recent building programme.

## **Geography**

204. GCSE results at grades A\*-C were below average in 1998 and in both the previous years. Pupils' results in geography were weaker than in the other subjects they took. Girls achieved more highly than boys over this period. At the highest grade level, results have usually been well below the national average. Results have been close to or above average at grades A\*-G. There are signs of improvement in the 1999 GCSE results. The number of A-level candidates has been small in recent years, and too small for valid comparisons with national figures. In 1998 and 1999 the three candidates achieved two A grades and a C grade.
205. Attainment in geography is improving throughout the age range, and attainment by the majority at the end of Key Stage 3 is now in line with national expectations. Most pupils display satisfactory mapping, diagrammatic and graphical skills. Higher attainers, in particular, possess good enquiry skills and are able to collect and evaluate data in enquiry investigations. A significant number of pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the factors influencing the climate of Great Britain, the water cycle and settlement hierarchies and patterns. In the case of higher-attaining pupils knowledge and understanding are frequently good. Because of appropriate reinforcement and emphasis by teachers, these pupils have a good knowledge of geographical language. The standards achieved by lower-attaining pupils are limited by weaker literacy and retention and recall skills over time.
206. By the end of Key Stage 4 the attainment of both boys and girls is in line with national expectations. As a result of thorough teaching, standards are higher than in recent GCSE examinations. Pupils have a satisfactory and in some cases good knowledge of physical and human concepts and processes. These include the causes and implications of population growth and river and coastal processes and their associated landforms. Pupils are competent in carrying out independent learning tasks. Higher-attaining pupils, in particular, write accurately and speak clearly and coherently. There is some extended writing, for example on a volcanic eruption, but this aspect of pupils' work is weaker than it should be. Pupils are able to carry out field study assignments effectively, gathering and analysing data to test hypotheses. By the end of the sixth form, attainment for the small numbers involved is in line with course requirements.
207. Progress at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory and often good for the majority of pupils. Higher attainers frequently make good progress and pupils with special educational needs, and those who are learning English as an additional language, make at least satisfactory progress, and good progress when supported by appropriate teaching materials or additional teachers or assistants. During the key stage, pupils make satisfactory and often good gains in mapping, graphical and diagrammatic skills. They also make satisfactory progress in the development of independent learning skills. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Good progress was observed in work on the causes and human responses to earthquakes, urban patterns and spheres of influence and on weathering and erosion processes and landforms. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils have developed a good understanding of geographical issues and the relationships between physical and human processes. Effective teaching methodology and the efficient use of appropriate resources underpin pupils' progress. The development of pupils' skills in information and communications technology is, however, much more

limited. Improvement in this area is urgently needed, including better access to computers.

208. Attitudes to learning are good. There is very little evidence of incomplete work and a significant majority of pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. They listen carefully to teachers and to one another and work effectively in groups, as well as on independent learning tasks. Response is particularly good in Key Stage 4. Only a small minority find sustained attention and concentration difficult.
209. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and in a number of lessons it is good. Well-planned lessons, employing interesting strategies, have an impact upon the standard of work. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and understanding and they provide pupils with geographical content and case studies that are accurate and up to date. They encourage pupils to ask and analyse geographical questions and develop skills. Work is regularly marked and some, but not all, teachers provide helpful comments to enable pupils to improve their work. Most teachers have high expectations and lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace. In a small percentage of lessons, expectations of what pupils should achieve are too low. Teachers maintain very effective discipline and use resources efficiently and effectively. Compared to the time of the last inspection, there is no longer over-reliance on one textbook and a greater range of teaching resources and strategies is used. It remains true, however, that the tasks set is often insufficiently rigorous for higher attainers.
210. Geography is one subject within the humanities faculty. The department was until recently at a low ebb. There is new leadership and improvements are being introduced. Appropriate priorities for further development have been identified. There is a clear assessment policy, but no centralised record of data to help teachers judge progress and identify areas of individual weakness. Throughout Key Stage 3, National Curriculum levels are not used or communicated in such a way as to help pupils judge how well they are doing. Although the subject contributes to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, opportunities to promote these aspects of pupils' education are not identified and highlighted within the scheme of work. The range of field study, with opportunities in each year, is a very good provision. Residential field study opportunities have now been introduced.

## **History**

211. GCSE in 1998 were above the national average as indicated by the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C. Girls did significantly better than boys and by far more than the difference nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining A\*-G grades was in line with national figures. There has been a marked improvement in GCSE results at the higher levels since the last inspection and they were some of the best in the school in 1997 and 1998. Both boys and girls have significantly improved, but the girls have improved at a faster rate. The provisional GCSE results for 1999 are in line with the 1998 national averages at A\*-G, but are below at A\*-C, especially for boys. Attainment at A-level is below the national average, but the numbers involved are too small for valid comparisons with national figures. In 1999, most of those who had embarked on A-level history with a secure base at GCSE achieved results that were satisfactory.
212. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 3 is, overall, in line with national expectations. Most Key Stage 3 pupils have a good historical knowledge and a satisfactory understanding of chronology and the key features of the period, an area of weakness at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils can select, record and deploy evidence from different sources and are beginning to recognise bias and reliability, for instance in Year 7 work on the murder of Thomas Beckett. They have satisfactory research skills that are promoted through regular project work, such as the Year 8 study of slavery, and Year 9 work on the Second World War. Most have a good understanding of causes, with many higher-attaining pupils showing the ability to prioritise and evaluate. Nearly all pupils produce satisfactory extended writing in various forms, with the best showing high levels of fluent expression; as was exemplified in an accurate account of the Wall Street Crash by a Year 9 pupil. Pupils are beginning to understand that events can be interpreted in different ways. According to their abilities, lower attainers and those with special educational needs produce simple pieces of narrative writing, and make satisfactory notes when they receive appropriate support. Otherwise, the general lack of suitable materials to match their needs constrains their progress.

213. In lessons at Key Stage 4, attainment is in line with expectations. Most pupils have a good knowledge of the main features of the period and can compare sources effectively. They have satisfactory research and organisational skills, often leading to well-argued essay work from higher attainers. Lower attainers also write appropriately with the help of “writing frames” and “starter sentences”.
214. Attainment in the sixth form is in line with national expectations for the course. Most students develop appropriate knowledge and understanding of issues. Many can select evidence effectively from a variety of sources. Most have satisfactory essay-writing skills, with the best articulating their views well.
215. During Key Stage 3, pupils’ progress in lessons is nearly always satisfactory and is occasionally good. During Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress in lessons, and frequently very good progress. This is a marked improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. Through the frequent opportunities for enquiry work, they develop effective skills of organisation and research. However, progress is slowed by the limited time allocation for history in Year 8. Rigorous challenge is more evident at Key Stage 4, where higher attainers make good progress in class in developing good skills of discussion and critical thinking, especially in effectively evaluating sources and interpreting evidence. Sixth form students make good and occasionally very good progress. They develop a sound critical awareness of source reliability and the complexity of historical enquiry.
216. Pupils’ attitudes to work throughout the school are, overall, good. They are frequently very good and are never less than satisfactory. Nearly all pupils listen attentively, settle quickly to work and concentrate well for the whole lesson. They co-operate and show respect for one another’s views and feelings, especially in the group work in Key Stage 4. Most pupils learn to work well independently. Pupils enjoy the responsibility of individual enquiry work and do homework regularly. Across the attainment range, pupils take pride in their work and only rarely leave it incomplete. Pupils respond well to the variety of activities and the excitement that the subject now offers. Consequently, it is becoming very popular, especially in Year 10, where there are now three groups preparing for GCSE.
217. The quality of teaching is nearly always good throughout the school and is occasionally very good or excellent. It is rarely unsatisfactory. This is an improvement compared with the last inspection. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well planned with learning objectives usually clearly explained to the pupils. One of the strengths of the teaching is the strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to work by themselves on problem-solving, and to think more analytically. Weakness in this area was strongly criticised at the time of the last inspection. Teachers expect much of higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. They are less consistent in this regard at Key Stage 3. A wide variety of teaching strategies is deployed. Class management is very good. Homework is set regularly and used effectively. The quality of marking has improved considerably.
218. The department is very well led by a committed head of department who gives a clear educational direction to the subject and has enthusiastically initiated successful changes. Effective curricular planning and development have been introduced. Pupils’ progress is monitored effectively, although practice might be improved further by the setting of targets at Key Stage 3. Information and communications technology, though identified in the schemes of work, is not used as well as it should be. An ambitious programme of outside visits provides a useful learning resource and a valuable cultural experience for pupils. The attractively organised history rooms with their fine displays of pupils’ work enhance learning.

### **Information and Communications Technology**

219. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is, overall, below national expectations. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations in communicating and handling information and modelling, but well below expectations in control and measuring. Most pupils have satisfactory general skills and can word process, manage desktop publishing and use spreadsheets to an acceptable standard. However, there is little evidence of pupils drafting or re-drafting of work in information and communications technology lessons, and pupils’ work is not annotated for future reference. Pupils have only one ten-

week module of information and communications technology in each of Years 7, 8 and 9, and few opportunities across the curriculum to improve their standards. Pupils experience measuring in science, and, in mathematics, control through Logo, but application of these skills is provided for only at low levels.

220. At Key Stage 4, standards are satisfactory in communicating and handling information for those pupils who take GCSE information technology. In 1998, results were in line with the national average and an improvement on results in 1997. The provisional results for 1999 dipped, however. Pupils' work is well presented and pupils are able to combine material from different sources - such as databases and spreadsheets - into a desktop-published document. Standards for pupils not following the GCSE course are unsatisfactory because they have very little access to information and communications technology to improve their competencies. No Key Stage 4 pupils experience measuring and control. In the sixth form the first groups took A-level and A/S level in 1999. Results were below national averages, but broadly in line with those in most other subjects. During the inspection standards in A-level lessons, in a stronger year group, were in line with expectations overall. Students show that they are able to analyse a problem effectively before embarking on the design of a new system, usually in a business context.
221. Overall, progress during Key Stages 3 and 4 is unsatisfactory. In the separate information and communications technology lessons at Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress in word processing, desktop publishing and setting up and manipulating spreadsheets. Across the curriculum during Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to improve their capabilities and there is very limited progress in knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils who take the GCSE and A-level options for information technology make satisfactory progress in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are not supported with specific hardware and software, and this makes their progress unsatisfactory, although in information and communications technology lessons they are given appropriate help by teachers.
222. Pupils show a lot of interest in information and communications technology and often use computers, including CD ROMS and the Internet in their own time to research or present work in a variety of subjects. In information and communications technology lessons, pupils are very positive, their behaviour is always good and pupils collaborate well with each other when they share computers or brainstorm ideas.
223. Teaching in information and communication technology lessons is predominantly satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and generally good or very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Specialist teachers have sound knowledge, understanding and skills, but the expertise of subject teachers across the curriculum is much more uneven. In the Key Stage 3 specialist lessons tasks are not modified for pupils of different abilities. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form teachers share the aims, objectives and expected outcomes of the lesson with their pupils, and more able pupils are challenged more effectively, often through probing questions. Marking is good at Key Stage 4 and at A-level: teachers' comments are constructive and pupils are given targets to work towards. Lessons are well organised, particularly at Key Stage 3 in view of timetable and room constraints. Relationships between pupils and staff are good in all lessons.
224. At Key Stage 3, the amount of time allocated to information and communications technology makes it possible for the school just to meet statutory requirements. At Key Stage 4, statutory requirements are not met. Planning for information and communications technology across the curriculum is not borne out in practice. There is no overall tracking of pupils' experiences and capability, although plans are being developed to do this. The number of computers is below the national average, and some of the available machines are ageing. Access to computers is difficult in many subjects because the specialist rooms and library suite are heavily booked.
225. Since the last inspection there has been little improvement in the cramped accommodation. Many teachers continue to lack confidence in information and communications technology, although plans are in place to improve this situation over the coming year through the use, for training, of New Opportunities Fund money. An area of improvement since the last inspection is that there is less hand-

written work in pupils' folders.

**Modern Languages  
(French, German and Russian)**

226. Attainment in GCSE across all three languages is broadly in line with the national averages.
227. Standards in French and German fluctuate, especially in French, but between 1996 and 1999 the overall percentage of A\*-C grades has improved faster than the national improvement. In three years the proportion of higher grades in German has doubled to above average. In French, however, overall standards have fallen to below average and are not high enough. The department's predictions of performance are generally well matched to the actual grades. In both French and German, girls outperform boys by roughly the same margin as nationally, although analysis of GCSE results over three years shows that, in relation to their prior attainment, and in comparison both with national and local figures in modern languages and with their performance in other subjects, boys do well. A relatively small number of pupils take Russian as their second foreign language. Results are consistently high, virtually all pupils achieving the highest grades. Standards at A-level in all three languages are consistently good, albeit from relatively small entries that make comparisons with national figures unreliable. However, the proportion of A and B grades is high, and students are rarely graded below D.
228. Overall, standards in the lessons seen at the end of Key Stage 3 were broadly in line with national expectations. Many higher attainers do well, decoding unfamiliar text, deducing gist from detail, and some seeing links between what they know already and their current learning. Across the attainment range, listening is strong. All pupils are familiar with extensive use of the spoken language in class, and most can extract relevant detail from short recorded extracts. Reading and speaking are generally satisfactory. Speaking is often uninhibited: pupils convey meaning, some with good pronunciation, and their short-term recall is good enough to enable them to perform dialogues. However, many do not memorise language or recall prior learning easily. Writing is the weakest of the skills, and is undeveloped except by the top sets. A few lower attainers do not recognise text from sound.
229. In Key Stage 4, standards in the current Year 11 are still below expectations in French, better in German and high in Russian. A sample of pupils' written coursework from Year 10 shows some higher attainers in French writing letters of complaint confidently and accurately. In German, however, a larger proportion of pupils, both higher and average attainers, write at length over a range of topics. Their grasp of sentence structure and word endings is more secure and their grammar base is deeper. Below the highest level, few pupils write or speak with confidence beyond the briefest statement. Many pupils can say simple phrases quite accurately while they learn and practise them, but do not retain them for use in other situations.
230. In Year 13, A-level students can use a range of foreign sources and a variety of written and spoken forms with relative ease. In Year 12, students in both French and German are finding the transition from GCSE very demanding. Much grammar is still insecure in Year 12.
231. Progress during Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. It is good in Russian and, where the teaching ensures good practice of skills, in German and French. The most able pupils make good gains in all languages. The lower attainers improve in listening and speaking when tasks are matched to their needs, and those with special educational needs make good progress when appropriate support and tasks are provided, but this is not always the case. In the second modern language, average and lower-attaining pupils, and those learning English as an additional language, find reinforcement and recall difficult, often because they do not practise speaking enough.
232. Progress improves in Key Stage 4. Higher attainers in all languages continue to make good gains, and dual linguists very good progress. By Year 10, the benefits of setting and modular GCSE objectives become apparent, as both speaking and writing improve across the attainment range. In lessons, most pupils make progress because the teaching is generally good.

233. A-level students usually progress well, by Year 13 becoming independent linguists in all skills. Students in the current Year 12 are not yet learning confidently because they still have techniques to learn in order to cope with the demands of A-level.
234. Pupils respond well. They are interested, attentive and behave well, often impeccably. In many Key Stage 3 classes, at all levels of attainment, there is an infectious enthusiasm for learning and a high level of self-confidence. Concentration and pair-work are good, and the response in oral drills often excellent. Pupils use dictionaries with increasing confidence. They respond positively to the award of merits for effort and the department's Key Stage 3 certificate of achievement. Many pupils with special educational needs show determination, encouraged by success in understanding and speaking. Some boys present their written work poorly and thus have an insecure base for future recall. Occasionally, there is disruptive behaviour by a minority of boys in Key Stage 3, and this can restrict progress for the whole class. Take-up of the second modern language in Key Stage 4, although above the national average, is not as high as one might expect, given the investment of staffing and time in Key Stage 3.
235. The teaching is good or better in half the lessons. In a quarter it is very good and occasionally outstanding. This teaching is the most significant reason why progress improves through the school. There are few weaknesses, but very occasionally teaching is unsatisfactory as a result of inadequate control, lack of variety or failure to match tasks with pupils' needs. Common strong features across the department are security in the language, polished techniques in oral drilling, good planning and use of time and resources, and very good relationships. A brisk pace, timed tasks, the practice of skills in appropriate sequence and the expectation that all communication is through the spoken language, characterise the best lessons. The most successful activities make learning both challenging and fun, and help pupils learn successfully in realistic steps. For example, pupils drill patterns using a variety of pitch and voices (or, as in Year 8 Russian, sing them to the tune of Old MacDonald); pairs practise silent dialogues in which the partner has to lip-read; pupils play the role of teacher, questioning the class from the front, as in Year 9 German. There is good use of home-produced worksheets suitably tailored to ability. Homework is relevant, appropriately challenging and set regularly. Where there are weaknesses, there are not enough visual stimuli to present new learning and text is introduced before pupils are familiar with sound, to the detriment of pronunciation. In some French lessons there is too much teacher-direction, which restricts opportunities for pupils to practise speaking by themselves. Some teaching of upper sets in Years 9 and 10 does not challenge pupils enough in pace or depth and is occasionally too tolerant of interruption. Planning is thorough, but sometimes in Key Stage 3 does not adequately meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language. Books are marked regularly but the department's good grading scheme is not applied consistently enough. Key Stage 3 pupils are not made sufficiently aware of how a piece of work relates to National Curriculum levels.
236. Leadership is very good. The head of department has achieved much in little time. Monitoring of teaching and curriculum development are very good, and development planning good. The allocation of time for the second language in Key Stage 3 is insufficient. There has been good progress since the last inspection in overall standards, improving the quality of reading materials, updating and monitoring of schemes of work and assessment procedures, and monitoring teaching. The department is committed to the principle of modern languages for all and the raising of standards. Examination results have been analysed for a number of years, and used to inform and improve practice. The department brings great credit to the school and deserves its reputation in the locality for its hard work and vision. Modern languages provision, in which its extensive links with the local community and abroad are outstanding, considerably enriches the pupils' educational experience.

## **Music**

237. Since the last inspection, GCSE entries have been increasing steadily. All ten candidates entered in 1998 achieved A\*-C grades. The 1999 results were somewhat lower than the national average for 1998, but this reflects a policy of accepting pupils of all abilities into the course, together with a doubling in the numbers taking GCSE. Attainment varies across year groups and key stages, but overall standards reflect progress that is at least satisfactory and often good. The majority of pupils in Years 7 and 8 demonstrate a basic general knowledge in listening and appraising, and fundamental

skills in performing and composing appropriate for their ages. They are on course to meet national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. There are examples of pupils achieving a higher standard than that expected for their age, and amongst older pupils, some outstanding work in composing and performing is evident.

238. Within lessons, most pupils make good progress, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Progress in creative work is effective, although for some tasks it is restricted by limited keyboard skills which result from insufficient teaching of proper playing techniques. Since the last inspection, music time in Key Stage 3 has increased significantly enabling a larger cohort to progress more easily to the GCSE course. There is no regular classroom support for pupils with special educational needs, but they are fully integrated into all tasks and make good progress during both key stages.
239. Most pupils enjoy their music lessons. A tight but fair discipline is applied to any lapses in behaviour or inconsideration of others' work. Collaborative work is generally good and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for the care of equipment and to respond to others' ideas and opinions. This they do, both in class and group activities. Relationships are good among the pupils themselves and between teachers and pupils, especially in Key Stage 4, the sixth form and in extra-curricular activities.
240. The quality of teaching is good, and in some instances very good in Key Stage 3. Positive features include high expectations, good planning and classroom management, clear objectives and encouragement and support to individuals and groups. Occasionally, a somewhat teacher-directed approach leads to a passiveness amongst pupils. Sometimes, the pace of a lesson is too rapid to allow for consolidation of new learning and the reinforcement of other skills. Often in listening activities, insufficient time is allowed for pupils to develop depth in their responses, especially in response to more open-ended questions.
241. The day-to-day leadership and organisation of the department are of a high and committed order. Comprehensive documentation includes a scheme of work that embodies National Curriculum requirements satisfactorily. A manageable assessment scheme includes opportunities for pupils' self-assessment. This is already beginning to aid planning, as in a recent review of the Year 9 scheme of work. Reporting is clear and relevant. The use of music technology has declined since the last inspection, but the department is aware of its shortcomings and is formulating a development strategy to replace stolen equipment and expand opportunities in this area. There is good provision of additional lessons on a range of instruments, involving five per cent of pupils, a quarter of whom are drawn from Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. This is lower than might be expected from so active a department. Apart from GCSE and A-level lessons during the inspection there was no evidence of pupils using instrumental playing skills in class or group work. A strength of the department is its wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities that involve some 20% of pupils. An impressive choir of over 150 achieves good standards and includes boys from all year groups. The enthusiasm and commitment of the choir is indicative of the sense of purpose in all activities, fostered by a staff fully committed to the promotion of good standards in the subject and its role within the school.

### **Physical Education**

242. In 1998, 70% of a large group of pupils entered gained A\* to C grades in the GCSE physical education examination. This is well above the national average. The two pupils who took the A-level examination gained pass grades.
243. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils are able to demonstrate their skills and understanding in a variety of contexts and groupings. In games activities, particularly in cricket, soccer and netball, pupils are confident performers and display a range of skills which are executed with accuracy and understanding. Pupils are able to transfer the skills learned in lessons to full games.
244. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 continues to be better than national expectations, as was the case at the time of the last inspection, with many pupils, particularly those in the GCSE groups, displaying a good standard of skill and understanding in a variety of activities. A large and enthusiastic group of



pupils has taken up the opportunity to prepare for GCSE during Key Stage 4. Work in health-related fitness is undertaken at a nearby fitness centre and pupils build up their understanding of fitness principles throughout the course, so that by the end of the key stage they are able to plan their own fitness programmes. Pupils taking the GCSE courses improve their understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject, and produce course work files that are generally well presented and detailed.

245. Because of the nature of the timetable, at the time of the inspection there were no physical education activities available for sixth formers, although a small, very able group of students is taking the A-level in physical education.
246. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, are given much support and encouragement by both the teaching staff and fellow pupils, and reach a very satisfactory level of attainment. Teaching is sensitive and supportive and there are no instances of pupils with special educational needs not being able to take a full part in the lesson. Pupils learning English as an additional language are also encouraged successfully to take part in lessons.
247. The school has a justifiably good reputation for the performances of its many school teams and they gain much success. Many pupils have represented the Borough of Newham in a range of sports, and some have gone on to represent Essex and to compete in national championships.
248. Across all year groups pupils generally make good progress and consolidate their skills, knowledge and understanding in most of the lessons. This is particularly the case when teachers allow sufficient time for pupils to practise and refine their work, which does not always happen. There is often clear evidence of pupils building directly on practice activities from a previous lesson, and, in general, the best progress is seen when teachers require pupils to evaluate their work. This happens frequently.
249. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards physical education both in their lessons and in extra-curricular activities, with many able to work productively without close supervision and to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils are able to follow instructions, maintain practical activities and apply the techniques that are being taught. Many display great enthusiasm for the subject and derive much pleasure from taking part.
250. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and, in 65% of the lessons observed, was good or very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they provide clear demonstrations and explanations. In lessons, aims are made clear, content is appropriate and the relevant resources are well organised. Following criticisms made in the last inspection report, pupils are now much more involved in the planning and evaluation of their work and this is having a positive effect on their attainment.
251. Since the last inspection considerable thought has been given to the curriculum provided. All pupils in Year 11 now follow a scheme of work that meets the demands of the National Curriculum. However, the situation that existed at the last inspection, whereby all Key Stage 3 pupils did not have equal access to the outdoor pursuits and dance provision still exists, and needs to be brought into line with the statutory requirements. The department's development plan has recently been reviewed; it now identifies a range of priorities and indicates appropriate progression within the curriculum. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' achievements are well established and are in line with statutory requirements and school policy. Many teachers give very freely of their time to provide a good range of extra-curricular activities, which are taken up by enthusiastic pupils. Pupils have the chance to take part in skiing holidays abroad, visit the LEA's outdoor pursuits centre near Hereford, and take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
252. The accommodation for the subject has been significantly improved since the last inspection by the opening of a good size sports hall in 1996. This facility, plus a gymnasium, tennis courts and playground on site are enhanced by the use of a fitness gymnasium at the Ashton sports field, good playing fields at the Whitbread Sports Centre and the occasional use of Fulham Cross swimming baths. These combine in having a positive effect on pupils' attainment. However, the time taken by pupils to get to the off-site facilities drastically reduces the amount of time available for active involvement in

lessons, and makes it more difficult for teachers to achieve the good progress they expect.

253. The department is well managed and benefits from strong leadership. Schemes of work, which ensure that programmes meet national requirements, are in place and enable all pupils to benefit from a wide range of physical education experiences. The staff who teach physical education work well together, support each other and show a very strong commitment to the pupils.

### **Religious Education.**

254. GCSE results between 1996 and 1998 were below the national average for the higher A\*-C grades, but close to or above the average for overall grades A\*-G. In 1999, the proportion of higher grades was low, but all students entered gained a grade. No A-level course is offered in this subject
255. Attainment by the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the expectations of the Redbridge Agreed Syllabus. Most pupils display satisfactory listening and speaking skills and by Year 9 they are using a satisfactory range of writing styles, although the opportunities for extended writing are limited. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religions and beliefs is at least satisfactory and in the case of higher attainers, it is good. Most pupils demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of the differences and similarities between world faiths and the ways in which religions influence people's lives. As at the time of the last inspection, most pupils understand the significance of symbolism to different faiths and are aware of the importance of rituals and ceremonies and the reasons for festivals and pilgrimages. Good examples were seen in a Year 9 lesson on the symbolism, rituals and significance of baptism within Christianity. Many pupils, particularly the higher attainers, are able to undertake investigations and seek out and collate information. The performance of lower attainers is limited by weaker literacy skills and difficulties in retaining and recalling knowledge over time. A few pupils find it very difficult to concentrate and this adversely influences their attainment and progress.
256. Religious education at Key Stage 4 is offered as a GCSE option, and numbers are small. By the end of Key Stage 4 the attainment of these pupils is below the national average. Only the higher attainers show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of patterns and places of worship. Other pupils are provided with a small amount of time for religious education within the personal and social education programme, and attainment here is well below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. The low allocation of time makes it impossible for expectations to be achieved.
257. Progress is at least satisfactory for the majority of pupils during Key Stage 3, and in some lessons it is good. Higher attainers frequently make good progress, particularly when the challenge is rigorous. The progress of lower-attaining pupils is hindered by weak literacy skills and difficulties in retaining and recalling knowledge. Most pupils, however, extend and consolidate their knowledge of the importance of religious symbolism and understanding of significant beliefs, ceremonies and festivals. In Year 7, pupils make good progress in the development of their own beliefs and in realising that there is more than one side to an issue. In a small proportion of lessons, boys make less progress than the girls. During Key Stage 4, progress is just satisfactory in the GCSE group, but because of the low time allocation, it is unsatisfactory in the non-GCSE groups. Progress in the use of information and communications technology to widen pupil's awareness of world religions is weak. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress, and good progress when supported by additional teachers.
258. Pupils respond positively in lessons, and attitudes to learning are good in most lessons. Pupils show an interest in the subject and quickly settled down to tasks. Most are very well behaved and relationships between pupils and teachers contribute to the standards of work achieved. Most pupils take pride in their work and join in lessons, answering teachers' questions and taking part in discussion. There is a small proportion of pupils in both key stages who find sustained attention difficult and they frequently indulge in chatter.
259. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and in many lessons it is good, with some very good teaching. As at the time of the last inspection, preparation and planning of lessons are good.

Careful attention is given to providing a range of tasks to motivate pupils, but even so the range of tasks and resources to meet individual needs is not broad or interesting enough. Teachers establish a working environment in which pupils feel confident to discuss their own views and beliefs. The management of behaviour is generally good, and relationships are very good. In most lessons, expectations are high and a good pace is maintained. Appropriate attention is given to religious diversity and the progressive development of ideas. Pupils' books are marked regularly and some helpful comments are used to improve learning. Teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and this has a beneficial influence on standards. Teachers encourage pupils to contribute their views on religious beliefs and encourage collaborative group work. In a very small number of lessons, poor time management results in objectives not being fully met and in some lessons pupils' lack of attention was not tackled firmly enough.

260. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at Key Stage 3. Time is inadequate at Key Stage 4, except for those pupils who opt for GCSE. Although the subject is taught within the personal and social education programme, the Agreed Syllabus scheme of work cannot be covered. This is a breach of statutory requirements. The need to improve assessment of pupils' performance is recognised within the subject development plan. There is no central recording of assessments to help monitor progress and possible under-achievement. Religious education contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but its impact is restricted by the low allocation of time at Key Stage 4, and its absence within the sixth form, which is a further breach of statutory requirements. The subject is well managed within a supportive humanities faculty. The very recently appointed head of department has already reviewed and rewritten schemes of work and has produced a development plan that identifies accurately the essential priorities for attention.

#### **Vocational education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form**

261. At Key Stage 4, GNVQ programmes are offered in two vocational areas, namely business and health and social care. Health and social care is currently offered only in Year 10. The pupils following the business programme are entering their final year. The quality of the provision is broadly appropriate. Pupils have a good understanding of portfolio development and use their independent research skills to good effect. Action plans for the higher attainers are comprehensive, and show evidence of review and use. Those for the lower attainers lack the required level of detail, containing mainly simple statements of possible activities.
262. Sixth form programmes are offered at intermediate level in business, science, hospitality and catering, art and design and leisure and tourism. Results have been in line with national standards for business, but below national averages in science and leisure and tourism. The four students following art and design performed well in 1998, achieving three distinctions and one pass. Non-completion rates were above average for leisure and tourism and science, which indicates a mismatch between students' expectations and the course, or that the entry requirements for the course were inappropriate.
263. Vocational programmes are well co-ordinated, including the arrangements for key skills, where additional tuition is provided for Part 1 students. "External verifier" reports are complimentary about the administration and assessment procedures. The majority of staff involved in the GNVQ courses have appropriate assessor qualifications. The resources available for the programmes are good, especially in business where the students have access to suitable texts and computers. The school does not offer A-level in any vocational area, and this will restrict possible choices for the current Key Stage 4 pupils who wish to remain in the school for post-16 study.
264. [Attainment and progress in these areas, and some other aspects of the courses, are covered in the sections of the report dealing with business studies, science, and design and technology.]



**PART C: INSPECTION DATA**  
**Summary of inspection evidence**

265. The inspection was carried out by a team of 14 inspectors who spent a total of 57 days in the school. 252 lessons, or parts of lessons, were inspected. Representative samples of written and other work from each year group were examined, together with pupils' records and reports. A large amount of documentation provided by the school, including schemes of work, was analysed before, during and after the inspection. Many pupils were spoken to about aspects of their work in different subjects.
266. In addition, inspectors attended assemblies and registrations. Inspectors held a range of planned interviews with members of staff, and spoke informally with members of the teaching and non-teaching staff. The registered inspector met the Chair of Governors. Other governors met various members of the inspection team.
267. Forty-two parents attended a meeting held by the registered inspector before the inspection, and 158 parents returned copies of a questionnaire giving their views of the work of the school.

**Data and indicators**

**PUPIL DATA**

	<b>Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)</b>	<b>Number of pupils with statements of SEN</b>	<b>Number of pupils on school's register of SEN</b>	<b>Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals</b>
<b>Y7 – Y13</b>	<b>1373</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>242</b>

**TEACHERS AND CLASSES**

**Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	69
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.43:1

**Education support staff (Y7 - Y13)**

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked each week	564.4

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	78.6
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Average teaching group size	KS3	27
	KS4	24

**FINANCIAL DATA**

Financial year:	1998/99
Total income	£3190148
Total expenditure	£3177017
Expenditure per pupils	£2419.66
Balance brought forward from previous year	£64824

Balance carried forward to next year	£77955
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## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1373
Number of questionnaires returned:	158

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	26	64	5	4	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	44	50	4	2	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	24	58	13	3	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	23	56	11	9	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	42	45	8	4	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	37	54	4	4	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	37	49	12	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	20	62	6	11	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	33	55	8	3	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	24	55	13	7	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	42	53	3	2	0