

# INSPECTION REPORT

**SIR JOSEPH WILLIAMSON'S MATHEMATICAL  
SCHOOL**

Rochester, Kent

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118839

Headteacher: Mr K Williams

Reporting inspector: John Woodroffe  
OIN: 7545

Dates of inspection: 15 – 18 May 2000

Inspection number: 184847

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Male
School address:	Maidstone Road Rochester Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Nixon, OBE
Date of previous inspection:	May 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Woodroffe	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Anthony Mundy	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Geoffrey Binks	Team inspector	English	
John Plant	Team inspector	Mathematics	How high are standards? – the school's results and achievements
Peter Hooker	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Terry Fitchett	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Paul Shallcross	Team inspector	Information technology	
		Design technology	
Sue Orpin	Team inspector	Geography	
Ian Coulson	Team inspector	History	
Ian Hartland	Team inspector	Religious education	
Jenny Newman	Team inspector	Physical education	How well are pupils taught?
Ivor Rushforth	Team inspector	Art	
Derek Blease	Team inspector	Music	
Sue Airey	Team inspector		How high are standards? – pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Equal opportunities
			Special educational needs
			English as an additional language
Steve Williams	Team inspector	Economic/Business	

		Education	
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The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School is a grammar school for pupils aged 11 to 18 of whom over 220 are in the sixth form. There are 985 boys and 17 girls. Approximately 25 per cent of pupils transfer to grammar schools at the age of 11. The pupils come from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. There are 43 pupils on the register of special educational needs, 5 of whom have statements; this is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language (2.3 per cent) is slightly higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 2.9 per cent which is well below the national average. The attainment of pupils on entry is well above the national average, but the ability range is wider than in many grammar schools nationally.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school. It has many strengths and no major weaknesses. Teaching is good throughout the school promoting well above average standards in almost all subjects. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they achieve well in a caring, purposeful and stimulating environment. Governors and parents give very good support. This is a highly effective school, leadership is very strong, management is good and relationships are excellent. It provides good value for money

#### **What the school does well**

- Attainment is very high in physics, chemistry, English literature and geography throughout the school, in physical education in Key Stage 4 and in A level art.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are excellent.
- Behaviour is very good. Relationships and personal and social development are excellent. Pupils want to learn and they work very well at all times.
- The school cares for and supports pupils very well. There is a unique sensitivity to the needs of others.
- The ethos is very good and pupils are proud of their school.
- Through the very good leadership of the headteacher, well supported by all staff, the school is successful in meeting its aim to "develop every pupil's intellectual and personal capacity to the full".

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in and the planning for the use of information technology across the curriculum.
- Standards in and provision for religious education.
- The greater use of day to day assessment in planning to ensure that: pupils know how they can improve; appropriate teaching and marking strategies are developed and implemented and pupils are achieving at their optimum levels at all times.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress and addressed all the key issues since the last inspection. The high academic standards have been maintained and in some subjects improved significantly. The quality of teaching in modern foreign languages has improved significantly overall and some is of an excellent standard.

Satisfactory progress has been made in extending the use of teaching materials and range of methods to provide consistent challenge. This success is reflected in the improved number of pupils who achieve the higher grades in GCSE examinations and in class. However, there are still some pupils who are required to complete work that does not extend them and some teachers are not planning for the most able other than through open-ended work and extension materials.

All staff are now involved appropriately in planning curriculum and whole-school developments. Governors are well aware of progress and management issues and the strategies for monitoring and evaluating the progress of pupils are in place and having an impact upon standards.

Spiritual development is now good and a fundamental factor in the sensitive and caring way in which all those in the school work with each other. The school has made good efforts to improve the provision for collective worship. However, it does not comply with statutory requirements fully.

The school has the capacity to maintain its high standards and improve where required.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
End of Key Stage 3 tests	A*	A*	A*	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	D	
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A	B		

The school's national test results at the end of Key Stage 3 have been consistently well above average compared to all schools nationally. Whilst they have been below the average for other grammar schools nationally, the gains made by the pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 to 3 were in line with those gained by similar pupils in other schools. Pupils achieve well in all subjects except religious education and information technology.

GCSE results are also very high compared with all schools nationally, but slightly below the average for grammar schools. However, the gains made by pupils as indicated by their Key Stage 3 scores and their GCSE results are in line with those made by similar pupils in other schools. Pupils achieve well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science as well as in art, music and physical education. Their achievements are particularly high in physics, chemistry, English literature and geography. Standards are not high enough in religious education and information technology.

At A level, the attainment of the students is above the national average for all schools. Students make good progress in all subjects and the pass rate is often 100 per cent. Overall, standards in the sixth form have risen since the last inspection.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their work. They are keen to learn which helps them to make good progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good at all times. Pupils are courteous, trustworthy and treat property and resources with care and respect.
Personal development and relationships	This is excellent. Pupils work well under their own initiative and are developing into very responsible and caring members of society.



Attendance	Overall attendance is very good and well above the national average.
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This is a happy and caring school. The very positive attitudes that pupils have towards their work are a strength of the school. There is a clear focus upon high standards in all that the school does and the desire to improve is evident at all levels. Pupils behave very well and problems are dealt with effectively by staff. Relationships throughout the school are excellent.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons. It is good or better in 79 per cent, very good or excellent in 37 per cent and unsatisfactory in only 3 per cent. This is good and an improvement on the last inspection. The high quality teaching has a significant impact upon the quality of the pupils' learning. There is some excellent teaching in art, design and technology, German and mathematics.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced and stimulates the pupils. The provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent and many pupils participate. Throughout the school the provision for information technology and religious education is inadequate to meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very good for all pupils. They are well integrated into the school and have appropriate access to all aspects of the curriculum
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	This is very good and all pupils receive help and support should it be required.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for personal and social development is excellent. Moral and cultural development are very good and spiritual development is now good. Pupils clearly benefit from the valuable programme of PSE.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The monitoring and supporting of pupils' academic progress and attainment is good and improving. Support, guidance and concern for pupils' welfare are very good.

Parents view the school very positively and work well in partnership to give good support in all aspects. This has an impact upon the attitudes and achievements of the pupils.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and manage-	The headteacher provides very good leadership and has a clear vision

ment by the headteacher and other key staff	for the school. He is very well supported by an increasingly influential management team and a hard working and committed staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities very well and clearly understand the strengths of the school and how it is to develop.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring of teaching and learning is good and, along with target setting, is developing well. Appraisal and performance management are very good. The principles of best value are applied very well and all matters relating to finance and budget management are very good.
The strategic use of resources	Resources and finances are used well to support teaching and learning. The match of staff to the needs of the school is very good. Accommodation is generally good.

The school is very well staffed by suitably qualified teachers. Support staff play a very valuable part in the learning process and the overall success of the school.

The headteacher provides very good leadership and he is a key factor in the success of the school. He receives good support from other staff, governors, parents and pupils. All aspects of financial management are very good and the principles of best value are applied very well.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High expectations of students' work.</li> <li>• Behaviour and personal development.</li> <li>• Very good variety of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• Good information about the school's work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality and regularity of homework set by some teachers.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of the parents. Parents are very supportive of the school, pleased with what their children achieve and the care and guidance that the school provides. The inspectors found some inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework, but judge provision to be good overall.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. The standards that have been achieved by pupils entering the school in Year 7, as indicated by their Key Stage 2 national test results, are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' attainment prior to entry is higher in mathematics than in English or science. The evidence from the authority's selection test results indicates that the prior attainment of a small, but significant number of pupils is below the expected level for entry to many grammar schools. Over the last three years, the attainment of pupils on entry has not changed significantly.
2. Over recent years, standards at Key Stage 3 have been consistently well above average compared to all schools nationally. Pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN), achieve well and make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils achieve level 6 or higher in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils who achieve level 7 or higher in the core subjects is usually high. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests, when compared to all schools, attainment in the three core subjects was very high, although it was below average when compared to all grammar schools nationally. However, the gains made by these pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the gains made by similar pupils in other schools.
3. Standards in the present Year 9 are not significantly different from last year. Overall at Key Stage 3, pupils achieve well in history, design and technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and art. Standards in geography are particularly high. There is underachievement in religious education, where there is inadequate coverage of the locally agreed syllabus and in information technology where there is insufficient application across the curriculum.
4. In English, standards of reading and writing are high. There is often good use of spoken English. Basic literacy skills are sufficiently developed in English lessons. This contributes significantly to promoting high standards in many subjects, although sometimes pupils' progress is restricted by the limited use of higher order literacy skills. In mathematics, pupils have very good numeracy skills. They use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge across the curriculum successfully, although there is some over-reliance on the use of calculators.
5. Since the last OFSTED inspection, the school has maintained its high standards at Key Stage 3. The school trends in performance have been in line with national trends.
6. At Key Stage 4, standards are well above average compared to all schools. In 1999, the overall performance of pupils at GCSE was very high, but slightly below average compared to other grammar schools nationally. However, it was above the average for grammar schools in English and geography and matched the average in art and music. The gains made by the pupils as indicated by their Key Stage 3 scores and their GCSE results were in line with gains made by similar pupils in other schools. In 1999, 95 per cent of pupils achieved at least 5 grades A\* to C, with 99 per cent of pupils achieving at least 5 grades A\* to G. Pupils achieve well and make good

progress, significantly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In 1999, the proportion of GCSE entries that were awarded grades A\* or A was around 40 per cent in the core subjects; compared with 30 per cent in other subjects. At Key Stage 4, pupils achieve well in art and music. Their achievements are particularly high in physics, chemistry, English literature, geography and physical education. Standards are not high enough in religious education and information technology. In history and design and technology, fewer pupils achieve grades A or A\* than might be expected. The school is addressing this.

7. The overall attainment of pupils in the present Year 11 is similar to last year, although teachers' assessments indicate that slightly fewer GCSE candidates are expected to achieve the highest grades A or A\*. At Key Stage 4, the school met its LEA agreed targets in 1999 and future targets are realistic and achievable.
8. Standards in the sixth form are above average. Students make good progress in most subjects and pass rates are often 100 per cent. Over the last three years, the performance of students has been significantly above the national average for all schools, although it dipped in 1999. The lower performance at A level in 1999 was directly linked to the significantly lower proportion of higher GCSE grades obtained by these same students two years earlier. The school recognised this and made particular efforts to monitor and improve the situation. In 1999, results in mathematics were uncharacteristically low. Attainment in the present Year 13 reflects a return to the previously higher standards and the standards in the present Year 12 are even higher. Overall, standards in the sixth form have risen since the last OFSTED inspection. The rising school trend has been above the rising trend nationally.
9. Mathematics, sciences and English are the most popular subjects at A level and generally students achieve well in them. Economics and business studies are also popular with most students performing well. Students achieve very well in history, government and politics, geography and music. Standards in A-level art are particularly high.
10. Overall, the high standards throughout the school reported at the time of the last OFSTED inspection have been maintained and in some subjects, standards have improved significantly. The school continues to make good progress in helping pupils with special educational needs achieve their potential.
11. Very good support is given to pupils with statements of special educational needs and work is well matched to their needs. These pupils make very good progress. They receive clear academic and personal targets and support is provided where necessary.
12. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are successful in lessons and in examination courses. Pupils who are gifted and talented generally receive additional opportunities to support their progress through extra-curricular and lunchtime sessions. Each department has introduced initiatives for advancing the very able. For example in art a "Nightlight" initiative has been introduced which enables talented pupils to work with Medway council on public displays. In classics, very able pupils have Greek lessons during lunchtimes and in modern foreign languages more able pupils have early entrance to GCSE in French and German enabling them to take extension courses at an earlier stage. Latin is available as part of the school curriculum.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

13. Pupils are very keen to come to school and they have very good attitudes to their work. This is strength of the school, which reflects the aims of the school and supports its ethos. In lessons pupils settle to work immediately, listen well, enjoy their lessons, respond to questions and volunteer contributions to discussions with confidence. As they progress through the school pupils continue to have positive attitudes to learning and work hard in lessons and sustain their concentration. In all lessons, pupils' attitudes are at least satisfactory and in 95 per cent of lessons they are good or very good. In 65 per cent of lessons attitudes are very good or excellent. In these lessons, teachers' high expectations are made clear and the tasks set are appropriately focused. Consequently, pupils apply themselves very well. When opportunities are given for pupils to complete tasks within a definite period of time they act responsibly and work hard without needing close supervision.
14. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is very good. They know the routines and procedures well and understand the way they should behave in lessons and in the social areas around the site. They are sensible and enjoy responsibility and the trust of teachers. Pupils are courteous to visitors and are keen to join in and instigate conversations. Many demonstrate a mature outlook and are able to take responsibility when it is offered. A large number of sixth form students act as prefects and senior prefects. To fulfil this role students are expected to abide by a code of conduct, which is also very supportive of the school aims and ethos. Younger pupils aspire to be prefects as the role is seen as one that is positive and ensures good maintenance of day to day life and organisation of the school.
15. The personal, social and religious education programme (PSRE) and many other subjects for example English, geography, design and technology, physical education and science, place high emphasis on personal development and good citizenship. Pupils are able to reflect on and understand, how what they do, might have an impact upon others. When in discussion they listen to what others have to say and show excellent consideration and respect for others. They recognise success and readily give credit for this. They also support others who may need some support. The pupils who are physically disabled are fully included and treated appropriately by their peers. Pupils and staff are clear about the response to inappropriate behaviour and this is based on high expectations of good behaviour, excellent relationships and a clear behaviour policy. Pupils value the certificates which they gain through effort and achievement and are pleased to be recognised for their good work and behaviour. The exclusion rate, which is low in comparison to national averages, reflects the improving engagement and behaviour of a minority of pupils.
16. Parents, staff and pupils consider that if bullying and incidents of oppressive behaviour occur they are quickly dealt with and the bullying policy is clear and concise. Pupils also have opportunity to use a confidential email system to alert the school to potential situations. In addition the monitoring of pupils' development has recently been given a higher profile and will include target setting for personal targets. Form tutors and heads of year play a central role in assisting personal development.
17. Attendance is very good and has maintained the high level noted in the previous inspection. Consistent attendance has a positive effect upon pupils' attainment in all year groups. Pupils arrive punctually for morning school and for lessons during the day. All registration periods by form tutors and subject teachers are brief and efficient.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. Teaching is good overall and there is no significant difference between the quality of teaching between key stages. It is at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons. Teaching is good in 42 per cent and very good in 35 per cent of lessons, with examples of excellent teaching seen in art, design and technology, German and mathematics. There is little teaching that is unsatisfactory (3 per cent). Teaching is very good overall in chemistry and physics, history, music and physical education, sixth form art and sixth form design and technology. In music and modern foreign languages it is always good or very good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was generally sound.
19. There is a clear relationship between the quality of teaching and the impact on how well pupils learn. Learning is good and better in 85 per cent of lessons and is very good and excellent in 41 per cent of lessons. There is no significant difference between the quality of learning in any key stage. There is very little unsatisfactory learning in lessons. Pupils acquire new knowledge with enthusiasm and are keen to develop and discuss their ideas. They are encouraged to do so by their teachers. The quality of learning is enhanced by the valuable extra-curricular opportunities and the excellent relationships between pupils and teachers.
20. Pupils make most progress and work harder when they are challenged and undertake demanding work. This is seen in the very good and excellent lessons.
21. Most teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and are able to communicate this to pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge in information technology lessons is not seen to be as strong as in other subjects. Right from the start of the good lessons a range of challenging questions and tasks reinforce and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils enjoy this engagement in discussion, as seen in many art lessons. In English, teachers have detailed background knowledge of texts such as "Lord of the Flies", resulting in pupils gaining a good grasp of technical language. In physical education lessons teachers show very good understanding of how cricket develops, illustrated in the way that the teaching of the backfoot stroke is structured. There are examples of lively, challenging teaching that engages and captures pupils' interest. A Year 8 English lesson for example, was planned well to create opportunities for small group collaboration in comparing and then evaluating other pupils' plans for building an ideal house and the persuasive copy they had written to sell it. All pupils, including some with special educational needs, participated fully in reading, discussing and coming to a consensus view on the merits of the designs and the selling copy before sharing their findings with the whole group. Some teaching in design and technology inspires and excites pupils.
22. Lessons are planned well by most teachers. However, in some subjects higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough. When teachers plan the lesson with a clear recognition that the most able pupils require demanding work, then they achieve very well. For example, in an excellent Year 11 lesson on factorials, the teacher allowed the pupils to discover for themselves some new mathematics and then apply it. The lesson inspired the pupils. They enjoyed themselves and gained in confidence.
23. In music, most lessons are planned to include an appropriate range of practical tasks through whole class, small group, paired and individual music making. However, at

times in some subjects the teachers use questions and tasks that are too restricted and they do not set challenging targets to extend pupils and deepen their thinking. Marking does not always indicate clearly to pupils how they could improve. More emphasis on targeting different resources and tasks to pupils of different abilities would improve standards even further. An excellent art lesson was well constructed and organised with excellent opportunities for pupils to work together, engage in evaluation and offer opinions and judgements on the quality of ideas and skills.

24. Teachers expect pupils to reach high standards except in religious education where expectations are sometimes too low. In the best lessons there is some skilful performance in asking questions and drawing out key facts from pupils. This is illustrated in art, German, mathematics, chemistry and physics. In some lessons pupils are expected to take control of their own work, solve problems and make decisions. For example, in an outstanding German lesson pupils responded to the challenge of spoken text at near-native speed and spoke with considerable confidence and using a wide repertoire of language.
25. Teachers generally use time in lessons well. Lessons begin promptly and pupils are kept working steadily and productively throughout. Some excellent organisation of resources and equipment allows for this. In the small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons however, the pace flags with an over-reliance on textbooks resulting in pupils not concentrating and becoming disaffected.
26. Teachers manage and motivate their pupils very well, particularly in business studies where the teacher promotes lively group discussions. Most teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and generate a supportive atmosphere where pupils feel encouraged to learn. A feature of the very good lessons is the excellent working relationships between teachers and pupils. These relationships promote pupils' learning as motivation is increased following praise, encouragement and celebration of success. In art, merits are used particularly well to reward good work.
27. The quality and use of assessment during lessons and the effective use of marking to enhance progress is only satisfactory. Some teachers use probing questions and this makes pupils think and reason, extending understanding. These teachers give feedback that informs pupils what they should do to improve. Verbal critiques are quite common in very good lessons. The quality of marking in books is inconsistent. Some teachers give clear comments that give pupils guidance as to what they have done well and how they could improve. Not all teachers adopt these approaches. Very good ongoing assessment was seen in an excellent design and technology lesson when the teacher monitored work throughout the lesson, set targets for pupils and marked work with praise. In excellent German lessons there is a constant review of work.
28. Teachers are aware of the special educational needs of pupils. Work is well planned for these pupils and consideration has been given to pupils' individual learning styles. Pupils make progress and learn well. As with others, pupils with SEN apply themselves well to learning. They show interest and concentration and are encouraged to be independent learners by the teachers and learning support assistants. Pupils who have English as an additional language learn well and make good progress. They receive the help and support that is required.

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

29. The curriculum is designed, within the framework of the National Curriculum, to ensure that pupils receive a broad, balanced education relevant to their current and future needs. It also includes some more traditional elements such as classics as well as the latest technologies.
30. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the school provides a very good range of learning opportunities which meets the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of all pupils including those with special educational needs.
31. Teaching is organised as a 5 day, 40 period week giving a total of 25 hours in each key stage and in the sixth form, which is similar to many other secondary schools.
32. Time allocations to different subjects is generally satisfactory, though there is too little time allocated to religious education (RE) and information technology (IT). At Key Stage 3 all pupils are taught all the subjects of the National Curriculum and personal social and religious education (PSRE). The Key Stage 3 curriculum includes: mathematics, English, science, music, IT, physical education, design and technology, French, German, history, geography, art and design and PSRE. Currently there is insufficient curriculum time for the element of religious education within PSRE. Sex education and drug awareness are taught within the PSRE programme which extends across both Key Stages 3 and 4.
33. At Key Stage 3 the statutory requirements of the programmes of study of the National Curriculum are met. However, the use of IT across the whole curriculum and within subjects is too limited and needs to be enhanced in areas such as research, analysis and communication and in data logging in science. Not all elements of design and technology are taught. All pupils study two foreign languages from Year 7 and are given the opportunity to include Latin from Year 8.
34. Mathematics and science classes are set by ability in Years 8 and 9 and in English in Year 9. These setting arrangements allow teachers to plan their teaching to match more closely the ability of the group they are teaching.
35. During Year 9 pupils and parents get clear and helpful information from the school to help them choose their options for Key Stage 4. Boys value this information and as a result of good support and guidance feel secure in their choices.
36. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting. All pupils study English language and literature, mathematics, science (all start a course in physics, chemistry and biology) and one foreign language. They also study design and technology. They are required to choose which aspect they are going to study for GCSE, but some aspects do not meet statutory requirements fully. In addition pupils have a choice of two subjects from art and design, business studies, economics, geography, history, Latin, physical education (for GCSE) and a second modern foreign language. All pupils receive careers education, PSRE and physical education. The curriculum is further enhanced by opportunities for pupils to attend lunchtime Greek classes. Information technology is not taught to all pupils in this key stage.
37. At both key stages the curriculum is broad and balanced and the option choices give pupils an opportunity to follow courses which particularly interest them or have



significance for their future careers. All choices are open to all pupils including pupils with SEN. The taught curriculum promotes pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development and prepares them very well for the next stage of education or employment. Whilst literacy and numeracy skills are generally good, there is no formal programme to develop the higher order skills needed for more advance study.

38. The school offers a very good range of high quality learning opportunities in the sixth form. Although no GNVQ courses are offered, there is a very good range of A level courses which meet the needs of the students very well.
39. Students undertake a work placement in Year 12; they are well prepared for this experience and the follow-up work enables them to reflect on the benefits to their personal, academic and career development. Careers education and guidance in the sixth form are very good.
40. Compulsory physical education in the sixth form enables students to take advantage of a very wide range of leisure activities. The Community Sports Leadership Award enables those who are keen to develop their leadership qualities in aspects of physical education to do so.
41. Religious education in the sixth form is delivered through termly conferences which motivate the students, but which do not meet statutory requirements fully.
42. Provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent and the way in which sixth formers are encouraged to take responsibility through activities such as the peer tutoring system is a very positive feature. The school provides a wide range of activities and clubs as well as a house system involving sporting and other activities. Pupils participate in rugby, hockey, cricket, football, tennis, badminton, skiing, swimming or take part in concerts, stage performances and athletics. Participation rates are high.
43. Learning opportunities are further enhanced through a number of school journeys including fieldwork in biology and geography as well as annual exchange trips to France, Germany and Holland. There are also work experience links to mainland Europe and Canada.
44. The governors' curriculum committee receives presentations from heads of department on developments in their subjects and members of the committee visit the school to see the situation for themselves. Since the last inspection the shortcomings in modern foreign languages, history and physical education have been addressed well. The standards achieved in IT are uneven.
45. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) receive their full entitlement to the National Curriculum. Equality of access and opportunity is good. Pupils who are wheelchair bound are able to move around all parts of the school and subject options are not denied to these pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) and learning support assistants (LSAs) work closely with teachers to ensure that appropriate opportunities are provided especially in the more practical subjects. Good after-school and lunchtime clubs are also available for all pupils with SEN. The good progress reported at the time of the last inspection has been maintained.
46. The school is very effective in promoting personal and social education and the provision for personal, social and health education is very good. The personal social and religious education programme (PSRE) contributes very well to this. PSRE also

enables pupils to develop good discussion and communication skills, problem solving and inter-personal skills and is very supportive of pupils' moral and social education. The scheme of work has been updated recently and encompasses aspects of health education, including sex and drug education, a consideration of environmental issues, economic understanding and citizenship. The school makes good use of outside speakers and agencies to ensure that pupils receive relevant and current information. This is a valuable aspect of the curriculum for all and has improved since the last inspection.

47. The modular programme for careers education is very good. Starting in Year 7, topics include self-awareness, decision making and action planning. Pupils complete an evaluation of each module and written comments are invited from their parents. The quality of careers teaching and advice is very good. The careers library is open at all times. Students have access to the Internet and to a wide range of careers and university publications, videos and CDs. Varied and imaginative work experience is provided for students in Year 12. Some students benefit from two weeks' work experience in Canada. Employers confirm the abilities and commitment of students and the effective support provided by the careers department. Students are well prepared for leaving the school.
48. The school makes very good use of community resources. Day visits are arranged to Rochester Castle and Cathedral, to other local and county places of interest and to major galleries and museums in London. Residential visits include sports tours abroad. Multicultural education visits have been arranged to a Synagogue and a Sikh temple. Recent visitors from the community have included Anglican and Catholic ministers, authors, an actor, a police liaison officer and speakers on a wide range of subjects. Good links are established with industry and commerce, although few employers respond to invitations to school events. Some parents and old boys of the school offer work experience placements. These many and varied opportunities make a valuable contribution to the learning and personal development of all pupils.
49. Students regularly participate in local events, including competitions for young enterprise and young musicians. Charitable collections throughout the year support a variety of local good causes and international relief agencies. The school buildings, especially the sports facilities, are used intensively by the community. Centres of excellence are established for soccer and cricket. Swimming clubs and affinity groups of all abilities occupy the swimming pool for many hours each evening. The range of community links provides very good opportunities for pupils' personal development and broadens their understanding of the world around them.
50. Very good links are maintained with primary and secondary schools and universities. Exchange visits for students are arranged with schools in France and Germany. Some local primary schools have free, regular access to the swimming pool and the sports field. Senior students coach the children in a number of sports and visit primary schools as storytellers. A level students on roll at local high schools are welcomed to the Mathematical School to study specific subjects.
51. The high standards in this area of the school's work have been maintained and in some aspects, for example careers, improved since the last inspection.
52. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good overall and the school works hard to prepare pupils for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

53. Spirituality is fostered in school assemblies where the Christian traditions and values are shared with the boys. Pupils visit Rochester Cathedral for a variety of services such as Foundation Day and Carol Services. House assemblies also make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments and at times groups of pupils take responsibility for running the assembly. In one assembly seen, Year 10 pupils talked to others in their house about achievements and set-backs, giving time for boys to think about how to deal with this and about those less fortunate. However, it is not possible for the school to provide daily collective worship for each year group together due to the size of the school and the lack of appropriate spaces. There is a valuable "Thought for the Day" and also opportunity for tutors to continue with the weekly theme, but the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not always fully met.
54. The spiritual development of the pupils is good. Since the previous inspection there have been significant improvements in the provision for a daily act of collective worship and a programme of assembly themes has been developed to encourage further opportunities for the sharing of values and beliefs. Spirituality is promoted within certain areas of the curriculum such as PSRE where there are opportunities to explore ultimate questions such as the existence of God. Some subject teachers take advantage of opportunities within their lessons to reflect upon experiences, which raise and develop spiritual awareness. In music lessons pupils are given many opportunities to listen to and reflect upon music pieces that move them and allow them to reflect upon the meaning behind the music. In art in a Year 7 lesson, pupils discuss the meaning of art forms and in mathematics some of the displays of work provide opportunities to consider the power and beauty of the subject. In addition, in some lessons such as mathematics and physical education, pupils are excited by the wonder of new learning and how it impacts upon future learning.
55. Through the introduction of a whole school approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum, teachers are considering and using a range of opportunities for spiritual development and improvements have been made since the last inspection. However, planned provision for the spiritual development of pupils could still be extended further.
56. The moral development of students is very good. Pupils are polite and well behaved in lessons and around school. They know right from wrong and demonstrate courtesy and consideration to others based on clear codes of behaviour. Adults in school are good role models for pupils. They treat pupils with respect, fairness and honesty and there are many opportunities for good hearted fun and banter. In response, pupils value the excellent relationships and achieve the very good standard of behaviour that is expected of them. Pupils are allowed access to most areas of the school during break and lunchtime and respond well to the trust shown to them by behaving responsibly. Pupils are able to leave their belongings in the open wooden storage racks provided, confident that their belongings will remain intact. Pupils with physical disabilities are respected and feel well supported by other pupils in the school.
57. In PSRE and English lessons, pupils discuss racism and prejudice and teachers work with pupils to consider issues about human nature with sensitivity and maturity. In music pupils are given opportunity to discuss how music can be used to change behaviour for example before football matches. In science and geography pupils discuss the tensions between development and pollution, whilst in English, pupils consider through role play, the responsibilities and moral dilemmas faced by parents.

In physical education pupils are encouraged to value fair play and sportsmanship and to understand other points of view. In tutor time pupils also discuss morality issues and consider future dilemmas such as the effects of IT on traditional activities, eg Internet shopping.

58. Through the work of the form tutors and heads of year pupils also take part in supporting various charities and are helped to understand the needs of individuals and groups within the school, local community and beyond. The school is having a positive impact on pupils' lives and they are constantly reminded of their moral responsibilities.
59. The pupils' social development is excellent. Teaching and non-teaching staff expect high standards of social behaviour and pupils are encouraged to show good manners when moving from lesson to lesson. The vast majority of pupils raise their hands to speak and seldom call out when others are speaking and are polite when asking questions. There are many opportunities for paired and group work and pupils are co-operative, willing to share, take turns and help each other. There is much collaboration and respect for one another and good examples of peer support are seen.
60. Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility and demonstrate initiative. Inspectors observed form representatives giving clear feedback to their form from school council meetings and house meetings. Pupils with special educational needs are also expected to work well individually and in groups and respond accordingly. Good use is also made of their strengths. An example of this is tennis coaching by a disabled boy for younger pupils.
61. During assemblies and on occasions when there are larger groups of pupils together such as lunchtimes and breaktimes, pupils wait and use their leisure time in a friendly manner. Lunchtime is an informal and social occasion.
62. Although it is a very large school pupils are well known to the headteacher, senior teachers and heads of year. Teachers and non-teaching staff also know the pupils well and care about them. In return pupils are expected to be polite and helpful and there are many occasions in and around school when this happens. The sixth form is also very personable and many students particularly as prefects, help younger pupils, especially Year 7 in many ways. They also help to organise and run house activities. They value the excellent relationships that have developed with staff over their years in school.
63. The school provides a number of residential experiences and visits, which help to develop social skills. Field study trips, musical events and many extra-curricular activities such as clubs, theatre visits, drama productions and sporting events also provide opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills. Pupils are encouraged to support each other within the school through schemes such as peer mentoring, support for sporting events and working on the Internet and many are seen acting responsibly before, during and after school. The school works hard to encourage pupils to adopt a sense of responsibility towards their community and to fulfil their role as good citizens in society.
64. The cultural development of pupils is also very good. Throughout the school pupils experience and understand the culture of others. In art, pupils work on textiles based on artistic images from other cultures such as Maori, Indian and religious art. Similarly

in geography the range of different cultures is considered. In modern foreign languages, students experience cultural exchanges to France and Germany and displays in and around classrooms reflect students' many experiences.

65. There are also many opportunities for students to study their own culture and the culture of others in religious education (RE), music, English, drama, geography, media studies, art and history. In English, pupils make good use of the library to support personal reading and authors visit the school to talk about their work. Many opportunities are provided to discuss poetry, film and novels. In mathematics, good references are made to famous mathematicians such as Pascal and Pythagoras and the school's maritime history is referred to when working on "bearings". In RE, PSE and careers, pupils discuss the use of non-stereotypical images to change expectations.
66. The links with industry and the community in the form of outside speakers are good. The large number of valuable extra-curricular activities within school provide further appreciation of art, drama, music and literature and sporting culture. The whole school benefits from the very high quality and stimulating artwork which is on display in the public places in school.
67. Since the last inspection the school has enhanced the opportunities for all aspects of personal development. Staff are always willing to spend additional time with pupils and put on extra activities to ensure that pupils are well supported in their school career.
68. The ethos of the school, the support and care for pupils and the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in excellent personal development and relationships.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

69. The health and safety policy is clear and concise and the school complies with health and safety requirements. Procedures related to child protection are very good and follow the Local Education Authority's guidance documentation. All staff have been well appraised of these procedures. Fire drill arrangements are comprehensive including specific guidance on evacuation of physically handicapped pupils. The school has designated first-aid qualified staff and the staff handbook indicates the location of first-aid boxes. Pupils are well supervised throughout the school day through a rota of duty staff and senior school prefects.
70. The school has implemented a system of departmental monitoring sheets and pastoral file notes involving both form tutors and subject staff to identify and deal with concerns about individual pupils' academic performance and personal development. In addition homework cards are widely used to highlight matters of incomplete homework and to involve parents in the monitoring process. These procedures ensure effective review, by both pastoral and subject staff, of the welfare and development of each pupil. The use of merits and commendations to reward academic progress and contribution to the wider school community as well as the award of certificates for sustained improvement are valued by pupils and are an incentive to their overall development.
71. All statutory requirements relating to assessment are met in full. Whereas satisfactory progress has been made in developing coherent procedures for

assessing how well pupils are doing, there is as yet, no consistency at each key stage and across all subjects. The introduction of departmental monitoring sheets to identify lack of progress is appropriate and the progress card system is widely understood as a checking mechanism. There is regular assessment of pupils' work in all subjects and departments are developing portfolios of assessed work to ensure that marked work is graded to a similar standard. Pupils' work is usually marked regularly, but the quality of written commentary upon marked work is often not adequate and does not give sufficient guidance on how pupils can improve nor how well they are achieving.

72. In many lessons teachers apply good review strategies to check what has been learned and give feedback. This does not always translate however, into the use of day-to-day assessment to inform lesson planning and particularly in planning for the full range of ability in mixed groups. There is a limited range of teaching strategies and use of appropriate resources in some lessons.
73. The setting of challenging targets and tracking of pupils' progress is still being developed. The use of progress cards is beginning to have a positive impact upon improved knowledge of pupil's progress. There are some very good examples of evaluation and review procedures with clear targets being set for example, in art, design and technology and physical education, whilst the mathematics and English departments analyse data and set appropriate targets for attainment at GCSE. However, these approaches are not being followed consistently by all departments and the impact has still to be felt upon raising both the number of A\* and A grades at GCSE and higher grades at A level. Each department has identified criteria for establishing which pupils are gifted and talented, but more use could be made of these assessments to ensure that this group of pupils make the best progress.
74. The school's measures for promoting good behaviour and the prevention of bullying are very effective. Pupils respond well to behavioural expectations both within lessons and around school and they understand and respect the feelings of others. Although behaviour is very good and there is very little evidence of bullying, the school is not complacent and a recent initiative, proposed by pupils, encourages pupils to use email to warn of or seek help for suspected bullying. Sixth form students are members of an anti-bullying forum and these students have been trained in listening and negotiating skills. There are appropriate systems for rewarding efforts and achievement and the "reward" culture is becoming firmly embedded.
75. Good tutoring procedures have been developed and generally there are high expectations, a commitment to the role and pupils are known well. Relationships between the staff and pupils are friendly and positive. Tutors check on attendance, remind pupils about the need to be on time and also help pupils to look after themselves. During tutor time necessary administrative tasks take place and these are carried out effectively. In addition in a number of tutor groups, inspectors observed very effective use of the time available where pupils reported back to the tutor group about a number of school council issues. These activities are frequently followed by readings from the bible.
76. There are policies and guidance documents which cover a range of issues that are crucial in supporting the personal developments of pupils. Tutors, heads of year and senior staff work hard to maintain a good standard. The programme of induction for new pupils is good and the head of lower school has good working links with many primary schools. Year 7 pupils are very positive about school and feel well supported

by teachers and older pupils. In other key years such as Year 9 and 11, pupils speak positively about the guidance and support they receive.

77. Communication between staff about pupils' welfare and work is good. The procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and educational development are being developed to have greater impact upon the progress pupils make. The mentoring system for older pupils is very effective and teachers and pupils report positively about its effectiveness.
78. Pupils with statements have these reviewed annually and, where appropriate, transitional reviews take place. Documentation is clear and well organised. Pupils who are physically disabled have their individual education plans (IEPs) reviewed and new targets set regularly, as do all pupils on the special needs register. Liaison between the school and the many external agencies is effective, ensuring that pupils with statements of SEN for physical disabilities receive appropriate care programmes. They work confidently and make good progress as a direct result of this support. They are also allowed to be independent if they wish. The provision for physically disabled pupils to access personal and private facilities is adequate and good use is made of appropriate equipment. Pupils with physical disabilities know that they can share their concerns and that there will be direct action as a result of this. Good monitoring programmes are in place to ensure that pupils with statements receive their entitlement.
79. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Registers are completed accurately and comply with legal requirements. Absences from school are rigorously investigated. Family holidays in term time are not encouraged and permission is refused if the dates clash with school events. Pupils absent for extended periods are supported while they are away and encouraged to bring their work fully up to date upon return to school. In the spirit of the school's praise culture, there is an award for those pupils who have 100 per cent attendance.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

80. Parents' views of the school are very favourable. At a pre-inspection meeting for all parents, opinions of the school were overwhelmingly positive. These opinions were confirmed by responses to questionnaires and by discussions with a number of parents during the inspection. The inspectors endorse parents' favourable views of the school. In questionnaire responses, 13 per cent of parents disagreed with a positive statement about homework. The inspectors found some inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework, but judge provision to be good overall.
81. The school's links with parents are very good and are greatly beneficial to pupils' attainment, progress and personal development. Parents have very good access to form tutors, subject teachers and members of the senior management team. The school is pro-active in telephoning parents when a pupil's progress or behaviour is causing concern. The prospectus suggests how parents may support and assist the school and they are invited to subscribe to a register of interests and skills. An active association of parents and friends organises regular social and fundraising events and contributes significantly each year to the school's budget. Recent purchases have included computers, sports equipment and furnishings. Each year the association funds five music bursaries for students and this year proposes to sponsor an artist-in-residence. The association cooperates very effectively with the school's governing body. Some families are active on both committees.

82. The quality of information for parents is very good. Parents of primary school children are very well informed about the school. A thoughtful and detailed induction programme prepares children for transfer and supports them fully until settled in Year 7. The school prospectus and the 1999 governors' annual report to parents include much useful detail in addition to the information legally required. Two bulletins are published each term and a school magazine once a year. Differentiated handbooks are produced for each year group. Additionally, a booklet gives detailed information about options available to Year 9 students and a prospectus introduces Year 11 to the sixth form. Options are fully discussed at information evenings and parents confirm the school's flexible consideration of individual preferences.
83. At annual consultation evenings for students and their parents, teachers give clear information about progress and standards of work. Teachers' annual subject reports to parents are good. Most reports indicate strengths and weaknesses and show clearly how achievement may be improved. Termly reports include subject grades and form teacher comment.
84. Parents have very good involvement in their children's learning. This involvement and support has a very positive impact upon pupils' learning and their attitudes towards school. Homework is set regularly by most subject teachers and is generally promptly marked and returned. Homework diaries are issued to all students in Years 7, 8 and 9, but the signing of them by some form tutors is inconsistent. Parents have numerous opportunities for informal contacts with staff. Many parents help supervise sports fixtures and field trips and some sing in the school choir. Parents are welcomed to extra-curricular Russian lessons.
85. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved in Annual Reviews. They are kept well informed about progress and targets as part of the reporting to parents system.
86. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) has very good working links with appropriate feeder primary schools and with many external support services. For example, pupils with physical disabilities benefit from the support of these services and the SENCo works on the advice provided. The health service and the behaviour service support a number of other pupils and their families.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

87. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. He is very well supported by a highly effective and efficient management team. There is a clear vision and educational direction in all that the school undertakes, focused upon raising achievement and high expectations. This underpins the good standards achieved and the good progress made since the last inspection. The staff is well aware of what must be done to continue this improvement. They have high expectation of themselves and the pupils. They expect to do well in both the academic and personal development of the pupils. The ethos of the school is very high.
88. The first aim of the school "to develop every individual pupil's intellectual and personal capacity to the full" is met very successfully. Developments in the delivery and content of the curriculum have had a positive impact upon pupils' academic progress. The school adds value to the attainment of pupils in all key stages. Relationships are



excellent throughout the school and all individuals are valued members of a purposeful and caring community.

89. Heads of subject departments and senior staff manage their teams well. They are developing programmes to monitor the work of both pupils and staff and are using this to raise standards and improve teaching strategies. This is beginning to have an impact in science and design and technology and has already brought about improvements in physical education, mathematics, English, modern foreign languages and history at Key Stage 3. The involvement of tutors in monitoring, target setting and mentoring of pupils is leading to an overall improvement across the curriculum.
90. The provision for and management of pupils with special education needs is very good, particularly for those pupils with statements of special educational needs. The way in which the sixth form students support younger pupils in their learning is an excellent example of the whole school approach to school improvement. The deployment and management of learning support assistants is very good and clearly focused upon and informed by pupil's needs
91. Documentation is of a high standard and appropriate for its purpose. Planning clearly identifies priorities for development. The planning and preparation for the inspection has been very good and the quality of the required documentation has been very high.
92. The governing body gives very good support. Governors share the vision of the headteacher and clearly understand the strengths of the school and what must be done to continue the good progress. The manner in which they view all those working in the school as an integral and vital part of the school community is a crucial factor in its successful development. For example, through the appointment of a librarian, a site manager, bursar and technical assistants, they ensure that the professional talents of the teachers are maximised and focused upon pupils' learning. They fulfil all statutory requirements and the target setting and appraisal procedures for senior managers and all other staff are clearly raising standards and bringing about success. They have addressed the issues raised at the last inspection successfully with the exception of the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
93. The impact of the monitoring of teaching is raising standards. In addition to a programme of classroom observation, the use of pupil performance data to improve teaching and set targets for learning in Key Stage 4, is an integral part of the process. Staff discuss what works and where there is need for change. Pupils and teachers are aware of the specific areas for improvement. A good example of this was the way in which the school was able to anticipate the weak A level results and introduce support programmes to improve the situation. Monitoring of behaviour and personal development is seen as a priority and pupils and their parents are kept well aware of any areas of concern. A strength of the school is its focus upon valuing all individuals, both pupils and staff.
94. Very good financial planning and management underpin the progress that the school has made and the developments in which it has been involved. The business plan is a valuable planning document, clearly indicating how money will be used to benefit the school over the next three years. Whilst there has not been an audit of the financial systems recently, the school applies the principles of best value very well. Unit costs and all other expenditures are appropriate and the additional grants that the school has received from the Trust Fund over the past years have been used

extremely effectively. Finances and resources are deployed well to the benefit of all abilities and ages, including the sixth form. This is a very good example of a school that has embraced curricular and management developments, both local and national, for the benefit of the pupils. Governors, staff, parents and pupils are rightly proud of their school.

95. The school welcomed this inspection as an important part of its evaluation process and development.
96. Teachers are very well qualified and experienced. Most departments are fully staffed with specialists. Support staff are well qualified and versatile. Staff responsible for administration, catering and for the maintenance of premises and grounds contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school.
97. The programme for staff development is very good. Numerous training opportunities are available each year for teachers and ancillary staff, related to the needs of individuals, departments and the school. Some long-serving senior teachers have very successfully assumed management responsibilities in new areas of experience. Classroom teaching is monitored by colleagues and by heads of departments. The headteacher observes the work of all teachers new to the school. A very good mentoring system supports newly qualified teachers. Detailed job descriptions for all personnel are updated regularly. The system for teacher appraisal continues to be very effective and developmental. Very good links are established with teacher training departments in universities at home and abroad. Student teachers and secondary school students from other schools are mentored very effectively and make valuable contributions to the school's work.
98. Learning resources are good overall and are very good in science, careers and physical education. Resources for information and communications technology are satisfactory. The design and technology department is deficient in computer-aided machinery. Some English textbooks are in poor condition and too few textbooks are available for religious education in Key Stage 3 and design and technology in Year 11. The library is a good resource and is used intensively by pupils in all year groups. Modern computers are available in the library and students have access to the Internet. Overall resources support learning well.
99. Accommodation is very good overall and particularly in physical education. In design and technology, work at higher levels is restricted by inadequate area for preparation. Some classrooms exposed to direct sunshine are inadequately ventilated. Throughout the school, the standard of interior decoration is good. Many areas are enlivened by excellent displays of pupils' work, widely appreciated and never maltreated. The buildings and site are free of vandalism, graffiti and litter and present no apparent risk to health and safety.
100. The school provides good value for money

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

101. The school has many strengths and is making good progress. It is constantly seeking ways to improve and enhance learning.

### THE SCHOOL AND GOVERNORS SHOULD:

Improve standards in information technology across the curriculum by:

- \* ensuring that statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met;
- \* developing and extending the use of information technology across the curriculum to enhance areas such as research, analysis, creativity and communication;
- \* developing teachers' skills, knowledge, understanding and confidence in using IT in their daily teaching;
- \* making more efficient use of existing facilities in lessons and at other times;
- \* providing better technical support for teachers in lessons.

(Paragraphs 3, 6, 21, 33, 36, 44, 109, 117, 132, 161, 166, 187, 188, 192, 193, 194, 198 and 199.)

Improve standards in and provision for religious education by:

- \* increasing curriculum time in line with the requirements of the local agreed syllabus;
- \* developing teachers' subject knowledge and expertise in order to provide a greater variety of tasks for pupils to develop a higher level of skills, knowledge and understanding;
- \* raising teachers' expectations about the quality and extent of pupils' extended writing;
- \* using level descriptions in the local agreed syllabus more accurately and effectively to promote better progress;
- \* improving resources to meet the demands of the local agreed syllabus and the needs of the pupils.

(Paragraphs 3, 6, 24, 32, 41, 219, 221, 223, 225, 226 and 227.)

Make greater use of day to day assessment in planning to ensure that: pupils know how they can improve; appropriate teaching and marking strategies are developed and implemented and pupils are achieving at optimum levels at all times by:

- \* ensuring that teachers' lesson plans are linked to previous work and identify appropriate learning strategies for the abilities of the pupils in the class;
- \* identifying learning outcomes and sharing them with the pupils;
- \* ensuring that pupils know what is expected of them and how they will achieve it;
- \* reviewing the work at the end of the lesson, identify successes and difficulties and indicating where this will lead in future work;
- \* improving marking of work: pupils should understand what a mark or a grade means in terms of their own knowledge and understanding; there should be more written feedback which tells pupils what they must do to improve; pupils and parents should know which work will be marked in detail and the time scale involved;

- \* developing the use of self -assessment so that pupils understand their own strengths and weaknesses better and set their own targets for improvement.  
(Paragraphs 22, 23, 25, 27, 71, 72, 73, 89, 120, 122, 135, 137, 148, 159, 170, 171, 205, 215, 223, 225, 234, 235 and 236.)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	177
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	35	42	18	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,002	224
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	25	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	42	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	21

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	155	0

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	150	154	153
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	150	154	153
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97 (99)	99 (99)	99 (100)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	86 (93)	96 (95)	78 (91)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	155	155	155
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	155	155	155
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	90 (91)	98 (98)	92 (95)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	152	0	152

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	145	151	151
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	145	151	151
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	95 (87)	99 (99)	99 (99)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	58 (54.8)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/a

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	107	11	118

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.0	17.4	17.0	2.7	10.0	4.5
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

International Baccalaureate	Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0
	National	82.5

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	4
Indian	49
Pakistani	8
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	7
White	915
Any other minority ethnic group	9

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	1
Other minority ethnic groups	3	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7– Y13**

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	407

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.6
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.6
Key Stage 4	24.1

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	2,643,780
Total expenditure	2,699,672
Expenditure per pupil	2,694
Balance brought forward from previous year	175,000
Balance carried forward to next year	119,108



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,002
Number of questionnaires returned	176

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	33	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	59	36	5	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	49	2	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	54	10	3	2
The teaching is good.	48	45	4	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	42	3	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	42	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	20	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	42	49	7	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	66	27	5	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	37	3	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	37	3	2	2

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

### **ENGLISH**

102. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests the percentage of pupils achieving level 6 or above, 86 per cent, was very high in comparison with schools nationally. The average scores in the 1999 National Curriculum tests however, indicate that pupils' performance in the tests was below the average achieved in grammar schools nationally, particularly in the numbers achieving level 7 or above. This is due in part to the school having a wider band of entry than most grammar schools and also to the fact that the school did not enter any pupils for the extension paper to the tests in 1999. The test results indicate that pupils have made satisfactory progress since the end of Key Stage 2 when they entered the school.
103. By the end of the key stage pupils have a good knowledge of the grammatical structure of English and write accurately and imaginatively. A sample of biographical writing completed recently by pupils in Year 9 was of a good standard. Reading skills are particularly strong by the age of fourteen. Regular time is allocated to pupils' own personal silent reading within English lessons, including a library based reading lesson for all pupils in Year 7. The encouragement of reading for pleasure supports the development of skills in responding to a wide range of poems, novels and stories studied in class. Writing and discussion about texts such as Romeo and Juliet and Talking in Whispers read recently in Year 9, produces mature and intelligent comment.
104. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is also well above the national average. In the 1999 GCSE examination all pupils gained a grade A\* to C pass in both English and English literature. This is not only very high compared with all schools nationally, but is above the pass rates in grammar schools. It represents an improvement on the achievement of the previous two years. Pupils' attainment was particularly strong in English literature where almost 90 per cent of pupils achieved A\* to B grade passes, a proportion well above the comparative figure for grammar schools. The work in progress and that recently completed, suggests that the standards of the current Year 11 are similarly high. In the revision lessons observed, one group showed a clear understanding of the themes and a sound knowledge of the characters in Lord of the Flies; others showed capable skills for their age in analysing and writing a response to an unseen poem in a limited amount of time. The good quality of work seen in Key Stage 4 is due both to the high demands made by good specialist teachers and to the strong motivation of pupils. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are encouraged to seek the highest standards in all aspects of the course.
105. Students attain well in the A level English literature examination in the sixth form. All the 104 students entered in the past three examination years have gained an A level pass with an average grade of just above C. The proportion of students gaining A or B grades however, declined in 1999 as it did in some other school subjects. The completed work of the current Year 13 students and their estimated grades suggest that this year's examinees should succeed better. Students observed in revision lessons had a good detailed knowledge of the text and the interactions of characters in Richard II. Others showed their ability to analyse successfully the structure of an unseen seventeenth century poem and to interpret its meaning. The discussion work

was of a good standard as was much of the written course work examined. Some particularly mature and sensitive writing has been completed in response to studying Alan Bennett's 'Talking Heads'. Students had mastered the technical strategies of writing for a television audience and, in some cases, matched well the irony and understated humour of the original scripts.

106. The development of media studies as an A level course in the sixth form is an innovation since the last inspection. Attainment in the A level examination has been good over the past three years with only one student out of 69 failing to gain a graded A to E pass. There was however, a reduction in the number of higher grades, A and B, achieved in the 1999 results compared with the previous year as there was in several other subjects, including English and mathematics. This was expected following the lower grades achieved in GCSE by these pupils although additional support had been provided. The work of the current students preparing for the coming examination and their estimated grades suggests that results will be better this year. Students seen revising their film and broadcast fiction work have a good knowledge of technical terms and film technique. They can relate the film they are revising to previous films studied. In the units of revision work observed on newspapers, advertising and marketing, students have a sound understanding of the language of advertising and a good general knowledge of the structure and ownership of Britain's newspapers. They are guided and supported effectively by well-prepared, knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers.
107. Teaching and pupils' learning in English is of a good standard, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. All lessons observed were satisfactory; over eight out of ten were good or better; almost half of the lessons seen were taught very well. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and use lesson time and homework very productively. Lessons seen in the inspection were prepared well to include opportunities for reading, writing and speaking and listening in different ways. Learning was particularly strong where pupils were engaged actively in group work. A Year 8 lesson for example, was planned well to create opportunities for small group collaboration in comparing and then evaluating other pupils' plans for building an ideal house and the persuasive copy they had written to sell it. All pupils, including some with special educational needs, participated fully in reading, discussing and coming to a consensus view on the merits of the designs and the selling copy before sharing their findings with the whole group. A similarly well-planned lesson in Year 10, provided an assessment opportunity for the speaking component of the GCSE course. It required pupils in groups to create role play situations by bringing central characters from Dickens' *Hard Times* into the contemporary world and then examining how the modern world would react to harsh nineteenth century treatment of young people. Pupils successfully practised their role play skills and developed further insights into a book they are studying. The observations of many revision lessons, particularly in Years 11 and 13, showed that teachers have high expectations of their pupils, that they are skilled in reinforcing examination techniques and that they do their utmost to ensure that the quality of coursework to be submitted is as high as it can be.
108. Pupils' behaviour in English lessons is very good. Most pupils are conscientious, well-motivated and produce homework of good quality at the appropriate time. They are thoughtful, helpful to each other and respond well to their teachers.
109. This is a well-organised, well-led and successful English department with clear operating procedures and clear plans for development. Teachers work together

effectively to ensure that pupils gain a broad and enjoyable introduction to poetry, novels, stories and plays as well as developing literacy and oracy skills. The high standards reported in the last inspection have been maintained. The department is aware of the limited opportunities available at the moment to use drama and information technology more centrally within the curriculum. These are areas which are targeted for development by the school as well as the department. Resource materials and equipment are easily accessible centrally to teachers, but some of the book stock is old and is ready for replacement. Teachers use a wide range of materials including videotape to enrich their lessons.

110. Literacy and oracy skills are satisfactory in all areas of the curriculum. The school does not however, guide all subject teachers in ways in which pupils' language skills can be developed and extended in subject specific ways. Few examples were seen in lessons of teachers highlighting new vocabulary to reinforce the retention of the new words, their meanings and their spelling. In some lessons such as business education, economics and mathematics, opportunities were not taken to focus on the key words describing new technical terminology. In other subjects such as history, opportunities are provided to write in different modes, sometimes using 'writing frames' to guide pupils, but these initiatives are not always fully exploited. The English department works closely with the school librarian to support pupils' individual reading development, particularly in reading for pleasure. A very strong fiction section provides support for reading for all age groups and an annual Book Fair held in the library encourages pupils to purchase books. The school library was the focal point of the school's contribution to last year's National Year of Reading supported by different subject departments. This has led to further visits to the school by established authors.

## **MATHEMATICS**

111. The mathematical standards that have been achieved by pupils entering the school are well above the national average. However, the attainment of a small, but significant number of pupils is below the expected level for entry to many grammar schools nationally.
112. At Key Stage 3, standards in mathematics are well above average. Pupils make good progress. Over recent years, standards have been consistently well above the national average. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests, nearly all pupils achieved at least level 6, with 57 per cent reaching level 7 or higher. When compared to all schools, attainment was very high, although it was below average when compared to all grammar schools nationally. However, the gains made by the pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the gains made by similar pupils in other schools.
113. Attainment in the present Year 9 is not significantly different from last year. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN), are able to tackle problems using geometric properties including Pythagoras' Theorem. They can draw and interpret statistical graphs such as scatter diagrams. The most able mathematicians handle, with confidence, work in algebra at level 8. Recently, the mathematics department has introduced a new scheme of work into Key Stage 3 in order to accelerate pupils' learning and increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades.

114. At Key Stage 4, standards are well above average. Over recent years, the mathematics department has an impressive record in GCSE mathematics and statistics. This represents a significant success for the school. In 1999, the performance of pupils at GCSE was very high. All but two pupils achieved grades A\* to C in GCSE mathematics, with 41 per cent gaining the highest grades of A or A\*. The 1999 figures were slightly below average compared to other grammar schools nationally. However, the gains made by the pupils as indicated by their Key Stage 3 scores and their GCSE results were in line with gains made by similar pupils in other schools. The overall attainment of pupils in the present Year 11 is very similar to last year. Teachers' assessments indicate that around 40 per cent of pupils are expected to achieve the highest grades A or A\*. Higher attaining mathematicians also take GCSE statistics. In 1999, there were 57 candidates and all of them achieved grades A\* to C, with about half of them gaining A or A\* grades. A similar group in the present Year 11 is entered this year. Overall, at Key Stage 4, the pupils achieve well and make good progress.
115. In the sixth form, all students follow A level courses and mathematics is a popular choice of study. Over recent years, students following mathematics courses have been very successful. For example, in each of the years 1997 and 1998, nearly 50 students took A level. Results were above the national average, with a pass rate of 100 per cent. In 1999, results dipped with a significant number of students failing to achieve a grade. This was expected following the lower grades achieved in GCSE by these pupils although additional support had been provided. However, in the present Year 13, standards are much higher than 1999. There are nearly 60 candidates and teacher assessments predict a return to the previously high standards. Some initiatives, such as setting and peer tutoring, are being introduced in the sixth form to help promote higher standards. A room for sixth form private study has been opened in the mathematics department and is well used by students.
116. Levels of attainment in mathematics are generally consistent across the different aspects of the subject, including investigational work. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson, pupils investigated a set of imaginative problems that helped to develop their thinking and communication skills. Pupils have good numeracy skills, but do not always employ the most appropriate methods for calculation. Opportunities to use mental methods are sometimes missed and there can be an over-reliance on the use of calculators. Pupils are generally successful at using and applying their mathematical knowledge in other subjects. Pupils' literacy skills are sound. However, the extent to which pupils can describe their ideas articulately using the appropriate mathematical language is variable.
117. The use of information technology (IT) in mathematics is under-developed and fails to enhance learning adequately. The department is keen to develop their expertise and IT has been identified as a priority in its development plan. The school has invested in new mathematics software.
118. Overall teaching is good in mathematics and there is a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Teaching is satisfactory or better in about 90 per cent of lessons. It is satisfactory in 25 per cent and good in 12 per cent. Teaching is very good or excellent in about half of lessons. The good teaching enables pupils, including those with SEN, to achieve well and make good progress.
119. The teachers work hard. Teachers organise their classes and manage their pupils well. They plan their lessons thoughtfully to involve pupils in their learning. For

example, in a very successful Year 8 lesson, the teacher began with a number snake – a warm up activity that encouraged the use of mental arithmetic. The best lessons are characterised by highly motivating teaching that is interactive and has brisk pace. Teachers use penetrating questioning to test the depth of the pupils' understanding. Teachers are often able to provide challenge for all levels of ability in their class. For example, in a very good lesson on scatter graphs, the teacher was able to use his considerable expertise to anticipate most of the pupils' difficulties. He provided helpful guidance on basic graph drawing, but also used skilful questioning to extend the thinking of the more able. Often, experienced teachers capture pupils' interest by demonstrating and sharing their enthusiasm for the subject. The successful teachers show a strong empathy towards the learners and often use humour effectively. For example, in an excellent Year 11 lesson on factorials, the teacher allowed the pupils to discover for themselves some new mathematics and then apply it. The lesson inspired the pupils. They enjoyed themselves and gained in confidence.

120. In some lessons, the most able pupils are held back by having to work through repetitive exercises. Teachers should accelerate the learning for these pupils so that they are can tackle more demanding tasks. In two lessons observed, teaching was unsatisfactory. This was linked to weak planning.
121. The pupils behave very well and most have an extremely positive attitude to the subject. They show interest and work hard. They can maintain their concentration throughout the lessons. Relationships are very good and are based on mutual respect. In the sixth form, students develop greater self-reliance and skills of independent learning. In some lessons, students are too passive and need to be more involved by perhaps being asked to demonstrate their skills and knowledge at the board.
122. From Year 8, pupils are set by ability and this policy results in a better match of tasks to the pupils' abilities. The regular setting of homework contributes significantly to the progress of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form, the setting and completion of assignments needs to be more rigorous and more closely monitored. There is some very supportive marking of work. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent. Too often, work is unmarked by teachers or by pupils and some books are untidy. Marking and the evaluation of work, often fails to inform pupils what they need to do in order to improve.
123. Since the last OFSTED inspection, the department has generally maintained its high standards. However, the development of the use of information technology has not been adequately addressed.
124. The mathematics department is well managed and the mathematics block is an orderly and caring learning environment where expectations are high. Departmental planning is focused on raising attainment and there is increasingly good use made of pupil performance data. Priorities for action planning have been well chosen. Several recent initiatives, such as the purchase of new Key Stage 3 resources, have contributed successfully to improving the quality of learning. The head of department monitors the teaching closely and provides guidance and support to help improve the quality of teaching. The leadership of the department is good.

## SCIENCE

125. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests the percentage of pupils attaining level 6 or above was very high when compared to all schools nationally, but below the average of other grammar schools. However, the gains made by the pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the gains made by similar pupils in other schools.
126. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is well above average and pupils have a good knowledge of the subject, though too few pupils attain the higher levels. This issue needs to be addressed.
127. At Key Stage 4 pupils study for either the double co-ordinated science examination or for the three separate subjects, physics, chemistry and biology (triple science). In 1999, 85 per cent of those entered for the double science examination gained an A\* to C pass which is very high compared to all schools nationally (46.7 per cent). In triple science the A\* to C rate in each subject was 100 per cent, which is very high compared to schools nationally (physics 87 per cent, chemistry 84.2 per cent and biology 86 per cent). The percentage of pupils gaining an A\* or A grade is also high. Direct comparison with similar schools is difficult as the entry pattern between triple and double science is often very different.
128. Since 1997, some A level science results have shown a decline. Physics and chemistry point scores however, are above the national average, but those for biology were below in 1999. Evidence from the current work of A level students and predicted grades indicate that this year (2000) results in all three subjects should improve. The inspection took place during the last teaching week before the A level examination when students were on the last stages of their revision programme. Verification of standards therefore relies heavily on teachers' predicted grades and past module tests.
129. During Key Stage 3 pupils follow a new and detailed scheme of work. Pupils' learning is good and they make good progress in their knowledge of science. Between Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 3 the achievement of most pupils, including those with special educational needs, is in line with expectations. Pupils can for example by the end of the key stage, put together an electrical circuit and measure the current in different parts of the circuit, carry out an investigation on rates of reaction and study the ecosystem of a pond.
130. At Key Stage 4, lesson observations, scrutiny of work and recent test results indicate that the percentage of pupils likely to gain an A\* to C pass will be higher this year than in 1999 and more pupils will achieve A\* to B grades. The school has taken measures to improve coursework and this should have a beneficial effect on results generally. Weaker pupils have been targeted and given extra support.
131. Pupils show good investigative skills and a good knowledge of the work which they are doing. When questioned they can for example, explain how the radioactive isotope Carbon 14 can be used to date the age of previously living things, or recall some of the properties of the transition metals. Pupils can use equipment safely and plan their investigations, record their observations and evaluate their results, though because of a focus on revision and preparation for examinations, few practical sessions were seen during the inspection.

132. Pupils follow the school's detailed schemes of work which fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Their written notes confirm that topics are being studied to the correct depth, though more use of information technology (IT), should be included for all pupils, particularly the use of sensors. Progress is monitored regularly by unit tests and the results held centrally. In this way pupils not meeting their targets are identified. Overall progress is seen to be good.
133. Pupils at both key stages are taught in sets, which helps teachers to pitch the work more closely to match the ability of the pupils. However, more work needs to be done to identify and give more challenging work to able pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3.
134. Pupils' attitude to their studies at both key stages and at A level is very good. They settle down quickly and show high levels of concentration. When required, they work well together in groups, support each other and work sensibly and safely. They come to class ready to learn and tasks are carried out quietly. Most take pride and care in their written work, which forms a useful source of information for future revision. The majority of pupils seem to enjoy their science and show an interest in the topic which they are studying.
135. The quality of teaching is good and in over a third of lessons it is very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well and have high expectations of their pupils. They use a range of approaches and manage pupils effectively. They use time well and lessons generally move at a brisk pace. They question pupils to check understanding and to move ideas forward. They make sure that pupils have good quality notes though often the reliance on copied or dictated notes leads to some pupils not being given the opportunity to develop their own note-taking and research skills sufficiently. Teachers' marking of pupils' books is often cursory and pupils are not given sufficient guidance on how to improve. Homework is regularly set and appropriate.
136. Subject documentation is comprehensive and up to date. Day-to-day management of the department is good and there is a good detailed development plan. Management roles within the department are clear and appropriate. Laboratory accommodation is adequate for the courses currently being provided. Resources are good and the department is well served by support staff.
137. Since the last OFSTED inspection, the department has generally maintained its high standards. However, more use of information technology (IT), should be provided for all pupils, particularly the use of sensors.

## **ART**

138. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in art and design is above the national expectation in both National Curriculum Attainment Targets. At the end of Year 9 most pupils' have impressive skills in visual investigation, can develop a variety of ideas and solutions for their work and evaluate these effectively. They show good skills in handling colour in painting and other media within imaginative compositions. Most pupils draw reasonably well from observation and in designing, but higher level drawing skills need to be further developed. In graphic design, pupils have a limited understanding of the relationship between image, text, meaning and technique.
139. The standard of research into the work of other artists is high and pupils' communicate their own ideas effectively in writing and discussion using an



appropriate vocabulary. Sketchbooks are used well in class and for homework. Standards in three-dimensional work are generally good, particularly in an architecture project, where groups of pupils collaborate together very well to design and make imaginative maquettes for imaginative buildings, in the process extending their construction and social skills.

140. At Key Stage 3, progress in art is good overall and in Years 7 and 8 it is often very good. Pupils' write effectively about art throughout the key stage and this practice helps the development of their literacy skills. In some lessons they offer thoughtful ideas and opinions about the meaning of works of art and this helps to promote their spiritual development. For example, in a Year 8 project on 'Self Portraiture', pupils enriched their understanding of art by sharing ideas about the meaning contained in examples of artists' work and how this could relate to their own paintings. Very good progress is made in observational drawing and in painting, with a high standard of work produced in self-portraiture and in a project on Cubism.
141. At the last inspection attainment in art was well above average for all schools nationally and since then this position has been maintained. Results overall have improved and a higher percentage of passes are gained at the higher grades in both GCSE and A level examinations. Over the last three years GCSE results at grades A\* to C have been consistently good, well above average for all schools nationally and broadly in line with those of other grammar schools. In 1998 and 1999, all pupils achieved grades A\* to C, with the percentage awarded A\* and A, well above the national average for all schools. In 1999 the examination results at grades A\* and A, show an improvement upon the previous year with 38 per cent achieving at this level.
142. Attainment in Year 11 is well above average for all schools nationally and the standard of work is in line with the examination results achieved in the previous year. The quality of three-dimensional work is high, pupils generally draw well from observation, create imaginative compositions and develop these effectively into large, expressive lino prints. The quality of pupils' research and development of ideas is very impressive and sketchbooks are used effectively in support of practical projects albeit often rather formally. Visual and written research into the work of other artists and cultures is of a high standard and integrated well into practical units of study at both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. At Key Stage 4, progress in art and design is good and in the sixth form it is very good.
143. At the last inspection results at A level were below the national average and there were no awards at the highest grades. Since then standards have improved and results in the last three years have been good, now matching the national average. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades has increased significantly and is now in line with other schools. In 1998 and 1999, all students successfully achieved grades A to E, above average attainment when compared with all schools nationally. In 1999, the percentage awarded grades A to B was significantly lower than the previous year. This was expected following the lower grades achieved in GCSE by these pupils although additional support had been provided.
144. In Year 13, the standard of sculpture produced by some students is outstanding, showing both very innovative ideas, high technical skills and often humour. For example, as shown in a sculpture very graphically depicting a figure thrown through a window, where the technique, concepts and execution grab and holds the spectator's attention. Many students work on a very large scale in drawing and painting and can

control the imagery and media effectively to create powerful artworks, especially on the theme of the 'figure'. Photography is used imaginatively as a creative tool, but with limitations in technical expertise. In Year 12 students produce an impressive standard of figurative drawing, exploiting large scale and different media expressively. There is little evidence of creative work using computers at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, apart from research and the recording of work using a digital camera.

145. Pupils have positive attitudes in art and design, enjoy their lessons and work hard. The take up of pupils on GCSE courses is good and recruitment into the sixth form has increased in recent years and numbers are now healthy. Pupils' behave well in lessons and relationships are very positive. Pupils generally work very well together and collaborative work is a strength. Homework is conscientiously completed and many pupils are keen to continue work outside lessons, attending the art rooms at lunch times and after school. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, pupils develop into independent learners and are self-motivated. Many make good use of their own computer resources to carry out their research and improve the presentation of written work in art.
146. The quality of teaching in art is good and never less than satisfactory. At Key Stages 3 and 4 teaching is generally good and there are excellent features in some lessons. In a few lessons teaching is satisfactory. In the sixth form teaching is generally very good. Teachers have very good command of their subjects and this together with the strengths in lesson planning helps to ensure that pupils make good progress. Lesson planning is detailed and contains clear objectives for learning, which in the most effective lessons are carefully shared with pupils so that they clearly understand what they have to do and how to do it. The pace of learning is generally good and teachers employ a variety of strategies to keep pupils interested and engaged. Lessons often start well with good introductions involving the pupils in discussion and questioning to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and in moving their understanding forward. Teachers foster positive relationships with pupils, create a purposeful ethos for learning and good discipline. In a small proportion of lessons, the organisation of pupils for whole class teaching and discussion is not very effective and results in some lapses in concentration.
147. In the best lessons high expectations are clearly conveyed to pupils by effective explanations, varied questioning and practical demonstrations of skills. In those lessons where teaching is very effective, pupils are given short-term targets to achieve, are engaged in lively dialogue about their own work and other artist's and given clear feedback on their achievements, rewarded with merits and given guidance on how to improve their work. The support given to individual pupils in lessons is consistently good and ensures that they achieve appropriate standards in the subject. Lessons are often concluded with feedback on what has been achieved and an outline of the next stages within projects.
148. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory the management of time and pace, the use of visual resources and questioning is less well developed and this impacts upon pupils' progress. When teaching is sharply focused and challenging, pupils' make very good progress in improving their practical skills.
149. The setting and marking of homework and coursework is good, being regular, consistent and informative about achievements and sets targets for improvement. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the teachers' methods for monitoring and recording pupil progress are effective and well matched to examination criteria. Pupils and

students are appropriately involved in the assessment and evaluation of their own learning and set targets for their own improvement. Reports to parents are informative.

150. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and external examinations. At Key Stage 4 and A level the schemes of work are detailed and well matched to the requirements. Many pupils use computers for research, but their creative potential is under-developed as yet, although there are good plans to address this in the development plan. A digital artist in residence is scheduled and this initiative should provide a catalyst for future curriculum development. Cultural development is very well supported within the schemes of work and by external art projects, artists in residence, Key Stage 4 and sixth form gallery visits, together with many opportunities for the study of other cultural traditions. Extra-curricular opportunities are good, but the lack of study visits to galleries and museums at Key Stage 3 is a weakness. The range and quality of displays and exhibitions of pupils' and sixth form students' work in the art rooms and around the school is of a very high standard and significantly enriches the environment.
151. The department works well as a team, staff are well qualified and the head of department gives good leadership and support to colleagues. Planning for the future development of art in the school is good and targets for improvement identified. The head of department now monitors teaching, carefully analysing examination results and using the information gathered to plan to improve standards over time. Resources are generally adequate with the exception of computer equipment, which is woefully inadequate. Resources are soundly organised and used well by teachers and pupils in lessons. The departmental technician provides good support for teachers, particularly in the maintenance of the ceramics area.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

152. Pupils achieve very well in and through design and technology and the majority are making satisfactory progress in designing and making. Pupils enjoy practical and theory lessons and teachers have worked very hard to develop and enhance interest as well as raise standards. There are excellent displays of innovative work. Valuable problem solving and other key skills are developed through the subject, these support many and varied career routes.
153. Teachers' assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 and observation of lessons indicate attainment above the national expectation and average attainment when compared with other grammar schools. Attainment upon entry is at the level expected for pupils nationally, this indicates good progress over the key stage. By the end of the key stage pupils' skills and knowledge of designing and making enable them to design with independence. Pupils' achievement in lessons is very good. Pupils gain understanding fast through well-structured practical tasks, which ensure the application of theoretical knowledge to designing and making with hand and machine tools. Control technology and the use of the computer to produce technical drawings improves pupils' achievement and confidence. All pupils regularly take home, well finished, small articles, often with moving parts such as cams or electronic circuits. Structured schemes of work are followed in all year groups; these ensure consistency of standards across teachers and year groups.
154. Attainment at GCSE for grades A\* to C in 1999 was above the national average. It was below the average for grammar schools with only 80 per cent A\* to C grades in

the full course and 67 per cent in the half course. These results do not compare favourably to other subjects in the school and fewer pupils achieved grades A\* or A than might be expected. Although courses have changed and results have improved, standards are still not high enough and there is a need to set even higher targets for all pupils. Predicted examinations results for 2000 are higher than 1999.

155. Attainment in A level has improved. Results in 1999 were good and now match the national average. From observation of lessons this improvement shows signs of being maintained with a large, well-motivated group of students. They confidently design and make products for others to use. They consider and answer complex specifications to achieve very positive design results.
156. Evidence from classroom observation and scrutiny of work at Key Stage 4 indicates recent improvements in attainment are being maintained in Year 11. Overall, this year group is reaching above the national average in the subject. Some work is only targeted at a GCSE B grade when it should be targeted at an A\* grade. In many cases pupils' grades should be one grade higher. Teachers' support materials, such as project check lists and writing frames for design analysis and evaluation, will need modification to reflect these higher expectations.
157. Some of the best Key Stage 4 design and technology work combines materials and components to make new designs such as, storage holders, furniture and educational toys. Many designs are innovative and of an excellent standard. By the end of the key stage pupils can analyse a task and develop a solution, considering a range of interesting possibilities. Too often pupils' analysis, annotation and evaluation lack sufficient depth to warrant high marks. Pupils are encouraged to sketch innovative solutions to design problems, they do this well and this is a great strength of the department. Computer controlled and automated machine processes are rarely used due to a lack of appropriate resources. Computer aided design is undertaken and some use is made of a small, old computer network and very basic software.
158. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. There is evidence of improvements in departmental ethos and pupils' designing and making skills. Key skills of problem solving, communication, number, information technology, working together and improving one's own learning, are developed through the various courses components.
159. The overall quality of teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4. In A level courses teaching is very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Lessons always have a very well planned structure, based on an efficiently organised and written scheme and other support materials. Efficient planning contributes to good teaching and pupil motivation. Relationships are very good in all lessons providing a very secure and efficient environment for learning. Teachers' control of pupils is usually very good, keeping pupils on task and motivating them to want to learn and enjoy the subject. The variety of interesting design tasks as well as teachers' enthusiasm and encouragement and support for learning, are aspects that characterise the very effective teaching. Teachers' expectations are high at Key Stage 3, but not high enough in the design aspects at Key Stage 4. Planning will need to be adjusted so as to take account of higher expectations. Whilst some marking is very good, at times it is infrequent, thus delaying feedback to pupils. Self-assessment and target setting have started, this is very good, but the impact in raising standards is not yet evident. Staff recruitment difficulties have impeded progress. Homework tasks are used well through the key stages.

160. In Key Stages 3 and 4 as well as the sixth form pupils have positive attitudes to design and technology, they enjoy the subject and the challenges set. Pupils are thoroughly involved in all practical and theory activities and they enjoy them. Pupils show a keen interest in practical problem solving activities and enjoy the mixture of challenges set. Pupils work safely. They concentrate well and listen to the teachers. Tools, equipment and accommodation are respected and cared for by all. A variety of club activities are well supported by teachers and include links with The University of Greenwich. The results of such links are very impressive and contribute to very high achievement and motivation in some areas. Pupils consider design problems with associated moral and cultural issues and this contributes very well to their personal development.
161. There is a good match of number and qualifications of teachers to the demand of the curriculum. The part-time technicians make a very good contribution adding to overall efficiency. Space for the preparation and storage of work is limited and this restricts the pace and depth of some work. Textbook resources are insufficient for Year 11. Department computer resources are poor. Computer aided manufacture facilities are poor. Teacher produced resources are good, but need to stretch pupils more. Only limited use is made of the school network and Intranet web site.
162. The curriculum does not meet fully statutory requirements in Key Stage 4. All of Year 10 are not provided with statutory design and technology courses. In Key Stage 3 pupils have equality of access to a broad and balanced and modern curriculum.
163. Leadership of the department is good. Standards, departmental policies and overall aims and ethos have improved and developed significantly since the last inspection. This is clearly evident in the excellent displays and examples of innovative work. The department has clear aims and objectives and the ethos in which the subject is taught reflects the school aims and those of design in industry

## **GEOGRAPHY**

164. Pupils' attainment in geography is generally very good and their progress is good. The subject is popular with pupils. They enjoy their work, are highly motivated by the subject and learn well.
165. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards in geography are well above national expectations in all aspects of geography. Year 9 pupils make good progress. They have a very good understanding of developing countries and are able to compare and contrast with their knowledge of Britain. They can use statistics in a range of forms and have used these to explore regional disparity. Whilst the most able have a good understanding of interactions between physical and human processes, some of their work provides them with insufficient opportunities to extend their thinking. Pupils have very well developed geographical skills, including mapwork and geographical enquiry. It is in the latter area of the subject that the highest attaining pupils demonstrate their abilities.
166. Attainment in GCSE A\* to C grades for 1999 (98 per cent) was well above both the national average and that for grammar schools. Pupils have a very good understanding of plate tectonics. Through their studies of Brazil and Japan, pupils have a very good understanding of population distribution. They have a very good knowledge of natural hazards and their primary and secondary effects. The higher

attaining pupils can make connections with countries' economic circumstances and explore the impact of natural hazards upon both economic and environmental issues. Although pupils' progress is good, the use of IT has been insufficiently developed. Pupils have very well developed skills of enquiry, but need more opportunities to use IT in order to extend their skills and thinking further.

167. In A level in 1999, students achieved grades which were well above both national averages and those for grammar schools. Twenty four per cent of pupils entered for the subject attained grade A and there were no pupils attaining at lower grades. These high levels of attainment have been consistent over the last three years. Pupils have a very good understanding of landform management, urbanisation, rural-urban conflict and regeneration. They are very skilled in their use of geographical questions and their understanding of environmental issues, which contributes well to their higher attainment, particularly in relation to decision-making questions for examination. Again, although progress is very good, IT is insufficiently used and this has a limiting impact upon learning.
168. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved throughout the school.
169. Teaching in geography is good overall, as at the time of the last inspection. Over half (54 per cent) is good or better and only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Across the department there are many strengths in teaching which help pupils learn and attain high standards. Teachers often use strategies that cater for boys' preferred learning styles, using practical activity, paired research, discussion and video material. For example, pupils engaged in soil testing were quickly gaining a very good understanding of the nature and structure of soil and how important variations in soil type are to understanding agricultural activity. Teachers skilfully use questions to provide greater challenge either by deeper exploration or by the use of more open-ended questions. The latter particularly support the learning of the higher attainers, giving them more opportunities to think at a more advanced level. Video clips are well selected and used, generating interest and understanding and good links are made to fieldwork, ensuring that it makes a central contribution to pupils' learning.
170. Although in most lessons, pupils are very well managed, where teaching was unsatisfactory, expectations for behaviour were insufficiently high. Many lessons were well structured, with clear purpose and suitable timescales for the activities. In a few instances, there was a lack of clarity of purpose for the lesson and the allocation of time for activities was insufficient. For example, in a revision lesson for GCSE, pupils were considering answers to examination questions. However, most did not answer the final question, which was the most difficult and needed them to utilise their knowledge of specific study work. Although teachers make good use of open-ended tasks and questions to challenge the higher attainers, there are also many tasks which do not.
171. Literacy within the department has a satisfactory impact upon pupils' attainment. Written work is almost always neat and composed well. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and A level students take notes systematically, which they use for revision. A range of writing styles is promoted and teachers are very careful to ensure that geographical terms are precisely used and accurately spelled. As yet the approach to literacy in the subject needs further co-ordination, so that there can be progression in the use of higher order techniques for pupils to structure recording information and deal with research information. Spelling is systematically corrected and work is marked

regularly. However, although there are useful detailed comments and feedback on some pupils' work, the practice is inconsistent and does not provide feedback to all pupils about their progress sufficiently and how to improve.

172. Pupils' attitudes to learning geography are generally very good. In almost all lessons they enjoy what they are doing and in many lessons learning is fun. They are interested, enthusiastic and participate willingly. Relationships are very good and pupils help each other with their learning. Pupils debate and discuss very well.
173. The curriculum provided has a good impact on learning, as it is broad and interesting. It enables pupils to learn about a wide range of places and environments through fieldwork, video and other visual resources. As yet, there is insufficient use of the World Wide Web. Fieldwork has been improved since the last inspection and its use continues to be developed. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example by opportunities for Year 11 pupils to evaluate the landscape and by opportunities for pupils to understand the cultures of other countries, such as Bangladesh.
174. The recently appointed head of department is already leading the department well. There is a clear sense of direction and well-written schemes of work. The monitoring of teaching and learning is well established and has begun to impact upon improving quality. As yet, there has been insufficient focus upon pupils' achievements and progress. The department works very well together as a team and this has enabled them to manage some staffing difficulties in a way that has avoided any negative impact upon pupils' learning.

## **HISTORY**

175. The attainment of pupils on entry is well above that expected from pupils of similar age. By the end of Key Stage 3 the pupils have made good progress and they exceed national expectations in their levels of attainment.
176. The GCSE results are above the national average, but below the average for other grammar schools. A substantial minority have performed less well than in their other subjects, but teaching strategies are being adapted to address this. Fewer pupils achieved grades A \* and A than might be expected. Standards have improved since the last inspection.
177. At A level students achieve good results, well above the national averages. This pattern has been consistent over the last three years. In 1999 79 per cent of students achieved grades A or B. The numbers of students studying A-level history has increased since the last inspection.
178. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have made good progress. A large number of pupils achieve levels seven and eight. The department is particularly strong in developing the ability of pupils to reason critically and to argue effectively in debates and in discussions. Pupils respond particularly well to lessons that have a variety of activities that are challenging and are carefully matched to their ability. For example in Year 7, pupils collated information, analysed sources and wrote an evaluation of the character and motives of the first Chinese Emperor.
179. Progress in history in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Pupils work with enthusiasm and enjoy the course. Their learning is most successful when issues and investigations

are clearly broken down and where they are able to exploit strategies that help to analyse the issues and record information. For example, in a Year 10 lesson a clear strategy for the analysis of political cartoons was presented. This helped pupils to be systematic and thorough in their analysis of the sources.

180. At A level standards are good. Pupils progress well through the course and there is evidence of challenging work in the students' files. Student work at A level is carefully planned by each member of the department. An extensive range of books and resources have been accumulated to support the study of both the British and European courses.
181. The quality of teaching is uniformly good throughout the school. It is never less than satisfactory. It is good or very good in three quarters of lessons. Pupils of different abilities are catered for using a variety of different strategies. The schemes of work in Key Stage 3 outline a range of activities that include the use of a wide variety of sources. Good use is made of writing frames in Key Stage 3, but more could be done in Key Stage 4 to improve the study skills of pupils. Study skills and a variety of teaching strategies are not currently written into the Key Stage 4 schemes of work.
182. The monitoring of pupil progress and teaching has just been introduced. The department is involved in the first stages of a programme of monitoring that involves classroom observation. Pupil work and the statistical analysis of pupil performance are analysed systematically. For example the department has recognised the need to increase the number of pupils achieving grades A\* and A at GCSE.
183. Assessment is satisfactory in all years. The use of self-assessment in Key Stage 3 is especially effective for pupils where they are able to set targets and evaluate their own success. Marking is satisfactory. It is at its best when the strengths and weaknesses are highlighted in language that is understood by the pupils and based on the targets set by the teacher. Ongoing assessment, using questions and working in conversation with pupils in class, is good. At Key Stage 4 the department uses strategies that help pupils understand what is required to achieve a good answer. For example in Year 10, pupils use an examination board mark scheme to assess and mark model answers.
184. The department works well as a team. Staff are very experienced and have made a considerable contribution to the good progress the department has made since the last inspection. The management of the department is conscientious and effective. There is a realistic and well thought-out development plan that shows an awareness of the major teaching and learning issues that face the department.
185. Department documentation is complete for Key Stage 3, but requires more detailed schemes of work for Key Stage 4 and at A level. Good use is made of investigative approaches and the department holds a growing bank of well-chosen teaching resources. The teachers share materials that have been successful, for example, one member of the department has produced a very effective individualised learning programme for the shared area on the school network.
186. Several initiatives, introduced by the department since the last inspection, have had a significant impact on improving standards. For example in Key Stage 3, the quality of the extended writing has improved as a result of the planned use of writing frames and a focus on specialist vocabulary. The use of computer aided research has also added an extra dimension to the work of the department, especially in Key Stage 3.



187. The use of computer technology has been effectively introduced to certain study units in activities that are based mainly on research and word processing. The department needs to develop the use of ICT further. The use of the school Intranet and shared area on the network is a good start. Lessons in the computer rooms are well-managed and purposeful, allowing pupils access to resources that they would not otherwise have available.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

188. Pupils' are not achieving as well as they should in and through the use of information technology in other subjects. The school has recognised this, has changed management and staffing and has started to put in place strategies to improve the situation. Information technology is taught as a separate core subject of the curriculum to all pupils except some of Year 10. New core subject teachers are working very hard to develop and enhance pupils' interest and raise standards. Pupils appear to enjoy lessons where computers are available.

189. Attainment upon entry in Key Stage 3 is above the national average. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils are reaching the national expectations in their levels of attainment and some exceed this. However, achievement is only satisfactory. This indicates only sound progress over the key stage. In Year 7, pupils complete structured exercises and quickly become confident with the use and application of computers. Pupils in the present Year 7 have made good progress. They are confident users of software. A new, structured course for all has been developed in core information technology lessons where pupils are taught modules of work, which progressively get more difficult, recapping and extending areas of experience.

190. The GCSE results for Year 11 pupils in 1999 are unsatisfactory and well below the average for other grammar schools with only 46 per cent gaining A\* to C. Results were similar in previous years. In Year 11 many take a non-examination course and only a few pupils take the GCSE examination. Due to previous staffing problems, which have been resolved very recently, results are not expected to improve significantly this year. The new head of department and other staff have put in a great deal of effort to change this situation. In Year 11, pupils' overall achievement in lessons and in coursework meets the national average; this represents only sound progress over the key stage. Pupils are confident in the basic use and application of modern software applications such as spreadsheets, control technology, desktop publishing, databases and word processing. Research through the use of the computer has started, but is in need of further development. Achievement in Year 10 GCSE is good after a slow start under a previous teacher.

191. There is no separate subject teaching of information technology in the sixth form. General subject use is underdeveloped. The school is under-prepared to deliver key skills in information technology to the sixth form. Where subjects are using computers, as in media studies, business studies and design and technology, achievement is good. There are missed opportunities to extend learning and attainment through information technology in most of the subjects of the sixth form.

192. The use of information technology in all subjects of the curriculum needs further development so as to fulfil National Curriculum and examination requirements in subjects and to raise standards. There is a great deal of potential for development because of pupils' enthusiasm for the subject. Where pupils do get access through

subjects, achievement and learning is very positive. Pupils use control software confidently in design and technology and science. In modern foreign languages and religious education, compact disc read only memory databases (CDROM) and new Intranet sites are used effectively. Pupils can use spreadsheets to model solutions to problems in mathematics, but rarely is this skill applied to other subjects such as statistics or science. In design and technology, pupils successfully design parts of their coursework with unsophisticated computer aided design software. Good presentation techniques are in evidence in all year groups.

193. Progress since the last inspection has been inconsistent due to some previous staffing and computer network problems. Achievement, standards and the variety of work seen have improved recently, but could be significantly better. They should be matched to pupils' abilities and used to extend them at all levels. Insufficient use is made of computing facilities across the school which have improved in quality recently. This is partly due to software and hardware incompatibility and reliability problems, which have held up progress and undermined teachers' confidence.
194. In lessons seen, in both key stages, the quality of teaching in the core was good. In some lessons it was very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Core teachers are enthusiastic and work hard to improve pupils' learning. Core teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is developing. New areas of experience are tackled enthusiastically. Teachers' expectations are high. Work is very thoroughly planned and monitored for pace and progress. A good variety of teaching methods is employed including material authored and published within the school by teachers, support staff and pupils. Teaching builds pupils' confidence quickly as in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were modelling the cost of combinations of carpet using a spreadsheet. Teachers ensure pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teaching to support work in mathematics, modern foreign languages, design and technology and science is satisfactory. In some subjects such as English, there is an uneven level of skill, three out of seven teachers require further training. Teachers in other subjects have often started using computers in their work, but as yet it has had little impact on achievement. Teachers use the computer rooms too infrequently; this is an inefficient use of resources. Teachers need continued support in order to raise confidence.
195. Pupils behave very well and attitudes to the subject are usually very good. Relationships between the teachers and pupils are very positive and pupils listen carefully to instructions and settle down quickly to work. Some pupils, with the support of the teachers and pupil monitors, use computers enthusiastically at lunchtimes and after school.
196. A new school Intranet is being developed by the librarian and has great potential to support subjects as in the case of a history topic. The use of the Internet is starting to give pupils valuable and growing access to relevant research information including that related to multi-cultural themes and foreign languages. Some pupils' enthusiastic use of computers at home supports their achievement in school.
197. The newly introduced courses in the core ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 3 and some in Key Stage 4 enjoy a broad and balanced experience of the statutory programmes of study. This is a significant recent improvement.
198. A new co-ordinator and subject team have been appointed recently to support the school and change teaching and learning practice, this is proving successful, but is in

the early days of development. There is a renewed enthusiasm amongst the boys for GCSE options since staff changes. New subject and school development plans have been drawn up and are valuable. Support will be needed at senior management level to implement and consolidate the changes. The qualifications of core staff are satisfactory for the curriculum they offer and are improving with self-help. One full-time technician supports technical aspects. Further support is needed for teachers in lessons. New Opportunities Fund Training is due to start; this should support teachers' confidence further. Overall, due to recent positive changes, sound progress has been made in the development of ICT since the last inspection.

199. The quality of computer and other learning resources is satisfactory overall. Recent improvements are having an impact and there are plans to up-grade more computers in the near future. However, computers are under-utilised in some rooms. The number of computers to pupils is at the national average of 1:7. Inefficiencies in the network and incompatibility problems have led to some frustrations amongst teachers and slowed progress. Accommodation and furniture are good, with the majority of computers shared between four rooms.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

200. At Key Stage 3 pupils are achieving well and occasionally very well. Levels of attainment are well above the national average across the range of skills with particular strengths in listening comprehension and in the understanding and application of grammatical structures. Additionally, there are many examples of pupils seeking help in the foreign language and using the language for their own purposes. In some notably strong lessons in French and German pupils in Year 8 presented their language skills to the class confidently and were able to deduce grammatical rules through exploration of given examples. In an outstanding German lesson pupils responded to the challenge of spoken text at near native speed and spoke with considerable confidence using a wide repertoire of language. Written language at this key stage is well presented and with good attention to accuracy.
201. Despite some fluctuations the results in GCSE in French and German have shown continuing improvement since the last inspection. Recent results in German at grades A\* to C are close to those for other grammar schools whilst results in French are slightly below. Results in both subjects are well above the national average. The number of pupils attaining the highest A and A\* grades is satisfactory, but there is still a need to reduce the significant number of pupils gaining only D and E grades.
202. Attainment of pupils in lessons at Key Stage 4 is well above the national average with achievement good across the ability range. Strong reading and listening skills are in evidence, but there is variation in pupils' confidence and ability to initiate the foreign language, particularly in the formulation of more complex language. Pupils at this key stage have a solid grasp of grammatical structures and are able to reproduce them correctly in their written work. Without exception they have little difficulty in understanding and responding to instructions in the foreign language.
203. In the sixth form, students in Year 12 are able to participate in discussion confidently in the foreign language with fluency and accuracy and to respond to language delivered at native speed. Some Year 13 students are less competent in deducing meaning from complex text and whereas some students speak well, there is evidence that a minority lack the confidence to produce extended language. Recent results at

A level in French and German have shown a slight decrease in the number of students attaining the highest grades, despite improvements in previous years.

204. The quality of teaching is high throughout the school. It indicates a substantial improvement since the last inspection. All teaching is good and in 25 per cent of lessons observed it is very good or excellent. Without exception teachers use the foreign language consistently for classroom communication and they explain things clearly and precisely. In all cases lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and time is usually very well used. Teachers plan an appropriate range of activities covering the different language skills, but do not plan in sufficient detail for the needs of all pupils in mixed ability groups. In most lessons teachers conduct regular reviews to check that pupils understand what they have been taught and at the start of classes they explain the purpose of the lesson. Where teaching is particularly impressive teachers have high expectations, set challenging tasks and manage their classes with relaxed confidence. In a Year 8 lesson, high level questioning and presentation of a video text at near native speed held pupils' attention and resulted in the production of language of very good quality.
205. Relationships between teachers and pupils are uniformly very positive and teachers capitalise on the excellent behaviour, commitment and enthusiasm of their pupils. Pupils enjoy their lessons, they make good and often very good progress and in a number of lessons are able to manipulate and reproduce complex grammar points and deduce meaning from written and spoken text. Through questioning and brainstorming techniques, pupils are encouraged to recall previously-learned language and apply it in new contexts. In some cases, usually at Key Stage 4, teachers should consider providing some further exemplification to overcome some pupils' reluctance to contribute in the foreign language. Whereas most work is regularly marked there is evidence of some work left unmarked over time and an inconsistency in the quality and detail of commentaries upon pupils' work to show how they can improve. Teachers make good use of available resources and although there is evidence of displayed material generated by information technology and access to a range of computer software, the use of such technology does not feature regularly in the planned teaching programme.
206. Management of the modern languages department remains largely compartmentalised within the separate subject areas although there is evidence of closer liaison in order to establish greater coherence, particularly to develop a more consistent teaching methodology and to share assessment procedures to ensure standardisation. Although this subject division does not appear to affect adversely standards or the quality of curriculum provision, it impedes the raising of the profile of modern languages and the clear direction of the subject and also reduces the opportunity for sharing the evident good practice seen during the inspection. There are good and comprehensive schemes of work and the monitoring process through paired observation, should be extended across the languages. There are opportunities for pupils to participate in links and exchanges and there are extra-curricular club activities to support modern languages. An area for further development however, should be to support identified gifted and talented linguists through accelerated programmes or distance-learning opportunities.

## **MUSIC**

207. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national expectation and in line with attainment in other grammar schools. Pupils are able to work very

well in group composing and performing activities; they have a good understanding of the elements of music and improvise 16-bar Blues with confidence and competence; they create stylish compositions based upon Japanese scales, demonstrating good aural, instrumental and ensemble skills. Pupils are able to appraise their work critically and learn from the comments of others.

208. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils achieve standards which are above the national expectation and broadly in line with other grammar schools. Composition is a particular strength; scores are detailed, reflecting well structured, imaginative and musically sensitive works for a broad range of ensembles. Performances of these works are frequently of a very high standard. Over the past two years, take-up at Key Stage 4 has improved significantly and results are broadly in line with similar schools.
209. A level take-up is small, but results are well above the national average. Standards of performance are high and pupils demonstrate considerable skill in analysis of works in Sonata and abridged Sonata form. Historical and stylistic awareness are of a high standard. Knowledge of Chorale and Two-part writing is impressive. Standards of attainment have improved since the last inspection. Pupils of all abilities make good progress at Key Stage 3 and very good progress during Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form across the entire music curriculum.
210. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. It is good in two-thirds of lessons and very good in the remainder. Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and skills and provide an enthusiastic and encouraging learning environment to which pupils respond very positively. Lessons are planned to include an appropriate range of practical tasks through whole class, small group, paired and individual music making. There are many good examples of skilful questions and suggestions to assist pupils with the works they are composing. High behavioural and musical expectations are well established, effectively enhancing pupil progress and achievement. As a result of the very effective teaching approaches adopted, pupils are confident, highly motivated, sustain interest and concentration, achieve good progress and clearly enjoy music. Pupils value the current music provision highly. This is amply reflected by the significant increase in participation of pupils in extra-curricular activities, public performances and instrumental lessons since the last inspection
211. Considerable progress has been achieved in a number of major areas since the last inspection.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

212. Currently, there are no external examinations taken in physical education. However, GCSE and A level courses are starting in September this year. Throughout all key stages pupils are achieving above the national average. Standards in Key Stage 4 are slightly higher than in Key Stage 3 and students on the sixth form Community Sports Leaders' Award (CSLA) course are working well above the national average, going beyond merely leading activities and showing good understanding of their teaching role. Pupils can evaluate their work effectively and make comments on how to improve. Non-performers are always included in learning and they are able to act as critical observers and identify strengths and weaknesses in performance. On the few occasions when attainment is below average, pupils are not able to perform with control and precision. Standards in volleyball and gymnastics are not as good as in swimming, badminton and cricket. In volleyball pupils do not think about attack and

defence and they lack control in their actions. In some gymnastics lessons pupils lack precision in their vaulting techniques. Pupils are very knowledgeable about the rules and principles of attack in cricket and improve and achieve good levels of consistency in swimming lessons when practising their survival techniques.

213. When given the opportunity, pupils undertake the role of performer and coach efficiently and effectively. When pupils act as mentors to each other, performance improves. Pupils' understanding is good and is extended when the teacher gives them the opportunity to think and answer probing questions. Understanding is also good when the teacher demands a high standard of observation and feedback, particularly in athletics and cricket. The progress made by disabled pupils is mainly good with well-planned programmes for inclusion that allows them access to most activities. One disabled pupil showed considerable expertise and mobility on the badminton court. The attainment of pupils involved in the extended school programme is very good. Pupils and teams achieve local, regional and national honours in a range of activities. Opportunities to take part in a range of activities out of school hours are very good. The nature of many of these activities enriches experiences gained in the physical education curriculum.
214. Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent. Excellent progress has been made in providing a more balanced curriculum that caters for all pupils regardless of their needs, abilities and interests. It is now rich and varied. The proposed examination courses will enrich this curriculum further. Opportunities for senior pupils to assist with the teaching and coaching of younger and primary school pupils are very good. Assessment is now related to the current National Curriculum, lesson objectives and embedded in comprehensive schemes of work.
215. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. In Key Stage 3 it is good. It is at least satisfactory in 89 per cent of lessons. In 69 per cent of lessons it is very good and good in 13 per cent. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. When teaching is very good teachers start the lesson briskly, recalling and evaluating previous work and explaining clearly what they expect pupils to learn during the lesson. The clear focus is maintained throughout these very good lessons. Teachers have very good knowledge of activities, physical education and pupils. They are excellent role models and organise pupils, time and equipment exceedingly well. All pupils make most progress when they are organised in ability groups at Key Stage 4 and the higher attaining pupils are challenged to think and improve their own performance and that of others. Lessons are planned as part of a progressive programme and in very good lessons teachers allow pupils to experiment, refine and adapt their work. Pupils respond to this good teaching in very positive ways. They are willing to share ideas, offer opinions and respond to questions. They always work collaboratively together and listen to and value, each other's ideas. They are infected by the enthusiasm of the teachers, well behaved and want to learn, persevering even when the task is difficult. The majority of pupils have a work rate that is very good. Some pupils are willing to experiment and take the initiative. They know what to do to improve and the CSLA students are secure enough to make and correct mistakes. Pupils with special educational needs learn steadily and with increasing confidence, supported by teachers who know their needs well. There is less progress made by the higher attaining pupils in volleyball and badminton and some pupils in Key Stage 3. In these lessons all pupils are given the same task to complete and demands are not made on the most able pupils to work out the cause and effect of their actions.

216. Pupils' attitudes to physical education, their behaviour and their relationships are very good and often excellent. All teachers foster this atmosphere. Pupils respond very well to established procedures and they support and praise each other. There were examples of spontaneous applause when pupils achieved something that had proved difficult.
217. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. All teachers are well focused on raising standards and improving, reflecting high expectations set by the head of department and themselves. There is a shared philosophy and total commitment from this hard-working team. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject and the teaching is good. However, findings need to be evaluated more rigorously and strategies put in place to inform the rate of progress made by pupils in each activity and the impact of this review on improved standards.
218. Resources and accommodation for physical education are very good with two significant weaknesses. There is much new technology to support teaching in physical education and the department could exploit this more to improve pupils' analytical skills even further. Although the care and respect for all property is excellent and the maintenance of indoor and outdoor facilities is very good, the state of the tennis courts is poor. To support the developing curriculum and to attain excellent provision these courts should be repaired and extended to accommodate a full class.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

219. Standards of attainment on entry are well above those expected from pupils of a similar age. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards are in line with national expectations, but below those in other grammar schools. The majority of pupils are not making sufficient progress and are achieving less than they could achieve. Most pupils are not learning in sufficient depth about different world religions because teachers' expectations are not high enough and there is too little curriculum time spent on the subject within the PSRE framework. Many pupils produce only a very limited quantity of written work. Pupils know about aspects of Christianity such as the life and teaching of Jesus, Christian prayer and aids to prayer and the design of churches. They know about features shared by religions such as symbols and ceremonies which mark stages in a person's life such as marriage. They know about some distinctive features of different traditions such as Hindu gods, the place of Nanak in Sikhism and key Sikh symbols, the importance of pilgrimage in Islam and Buddhist teaching about the nature of human life.
220. At Key Stage 4 standards are in line with national expectations and other grammar schools. Students develop their understanding of further aspects of Christianity such as problems between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. They appreciate issues Buddhists may encounter in the workplace as well as factors involved in a range of moral issues. They understand some of the issues involved in a consideration of the existence of God. There is insufficient evidence to judge attainment and progress in the sixth form where students attend a number of school-based conferences. A recent conference on medical and sexual ethics led by a well informed and amusing outside speaker was valued and enjoyed by students.
221. Pupils are making good progress in speaking and listening and in their use of information technology (IT) as a resource for learning. Attitudes to RE have improved and are now good throughout the school and more artefacts and videotapes have

been acquired. Staff have undertaken some in-service training. There are still insufficient textbooks. The school does not offer GCSE or A level religious studies courses.

222. In all lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 teaching is never less than satisfactory and there is some very good teaching at Key Stage 4. In the most effective lessons, teachers used appropriate resources such as videos and artefacts to stimulate interest, focus attention and reinforce learning such as in a lesson on baptism when a baptismal gown and card were displayed and discussed. Effective teaching encouraged the use of IT to obtain, process and present information. Good teaching was seen when pupils were required to apply their knowledge of religions. In a lesson on Buddhism, pupils were asked to identify issues which a Buddhist might encounter if she/he were employed in such jobs as a politician, an architect or a prison governor and how Buddhist teachings would help her/him to resolve the issues. They did this with interest and achieved good levels of success.
223. Weaker teaching which restricted progress occurred when teacher's expectations were too low. Tasks were set that were not appropriate for the abilities of all pupils, especially the most able and the teacher did not expect the pupils to develop the higher order skills of problem solving, analysis and evaluation as an integral part of their learning. Weaker features include: teachers talking for extended periods of time; not enabling pupils to learn in different ways and not requiring sufficient written work, especially extended writing, for each unit of work. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but not often enough and written comments are given, but not always making it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. Pupils set their own targets, but teachers make insufficient comments on them.
224. Most pupils display a positive attitude towards religious education, an interest in religious and moral issues and behave very well. Most willingly respond to and ask questions and can sustain concentration over long periods in discussions. Pupils work very well together and respect each other's views. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are very good.
225. The staff work hard and have the best interest of the pupils at heart. Subject leadership focuses well on planning, teamworking and monitoring the progress of pupils, but there is insufficient focus upon raising standards and promoting high expectations. Teaching is monitored, but regular reviews of pupils' work and teachers' marking is underdeveloped.
226. Several staff teach religious education, not all of whom are subject specialists. Whilst non-specialists possess satisfactory subject knowledge and are supported by other colleagues, they are not always able to respond fully to pupils' questions about religious belief and practice. The good displays of pupils' work in the classrooms helps to create a positive learning environment.
227. The new schemes of work based on the local agreed syllabus are good and being used by the teachers. However, planning is not linked sufficiently to specific syllabus requirements relating to time allocation for different religions. There is too little time allocated to the subject within the PSRE framework to meet fully the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus, consequently progress, standards of achievement and opportunities to study different religions in depth are limited. Provision for the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements.



228. Overall, limited progress has been made in religious education since the last inspection.

## **ECONOMICS/ BUSINESS STUDIES**

229. At Key Stage 4, results in GCSE economics are above the national average with 25 per cent of pupils achieving an A or A\* grade in 1999. This represents a slight improvement since the previous year and a considerable improvement on the 1997 results.

230. Pupils achieve well in GCSE economics. They have a good understanding of basic economic theory and a good underpinning knowledge of current economic issues such as the difficulties experienced by the motor vehicle industry. They contribute well to class discussions and can apply their knowledge of theory to current issues in economics. Weaker pupils have a firm grasp of the basic concepts and vocabulary of the subject.

231. In the sixth form, results at A level are above the national average in both business studies and economics. Students achieve well in A level economics and in the best lessons, students develop critical thinking skills, discuss current economic issues with confidence and show an ability to apply economic theory to current economic issues. In business studies lessons, students' achievement is generally good; students have a good understanding of the theoretical framework of the subject and are able to apply it to good effect.

232. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

233. Business studies and economics were not covered in the previous inspection report and therefore it is not possible to make a comparison with the standards achieved in this subjects at the time of the previous inspection.

234. In economics, at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the overall quality of teaching is good and often very good. In over a quarter of the lessons seen, teaching was very good and the quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory. Lessons are very well planned and clear objectives are set which are sometimes shared with pupils. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a clear concept of public examination requirements, which they use to very good effect. Teachers make very effective use of their time. In some lessons there is an over-emphasis on whole class teaching with limited provision for the most able and the least able. This can lead to the relatively high attaining pupils and the relatively low attaining pupils making only satisfactory progress while the average pupil progresses very well. There is insufficient use of information technology in the teaching of the subject. Marking is accurate and evaluative, but targets for improvement are not always made clear to the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported.

235. In business studies, teaching is generally good. Lessons are very well planned and clear objectives are set. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make very effective use of their time. In the better lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching styles. For example, in one revision lesson preparing for a case-study examination, students tackling problems in groups enabled learning to be promoted very effectively, with students engaging in some good critical thinking. In some lessons there is an over-emphasis on note-taking and a lack of differentiated provision for the

most able and the least able means that some students' progress is only satisfactory, while others progress well. In the teaching of business studies at the school, there is insufficient use of the local business community, although students are encouraged to draw on their work placements in Year 12 to develop their business understanding. There is insufficient use of information technology in the teaching of the subject. Marking is accurate and evaluative, but targets for improvement are not always made clear to the students.

236. Management of economics is satisfactory. Regular department meetings are held, there is purposeful discussion and key decisions are acted upon. Teachers are committed and hard working. Qualifications and experience are well matched to the demands of the subject. Monitoring of teaching has taken place and this is seen as being supportive and helping to raise standards. Progress in making effective use of new technology has been slow. Although members of the department co-operate well informally, the lack of a departmental scheme of work means that good practice in teachers' planning is not shared effectively. Strategies for differentiation are underdeveloped. Business studies is managed separately. The teachers work well together, but they do not meet formally as a team and schemes of work are not shared or discussed.
237. The senior management of the school has a good strategy prepared to provide a clear strategic direction for further development of the two subjects.
238. Accommodation in business studies and economics is satisfactory and learning resources are satisfactory in most respects, although there are insufficient up-to-date reference materials in the school library and in the specialist base rooms.