

INSPECTION REPORT

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Faversham

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118921

Headteacher: Mr G Carminati

Reporting inspector: Paul Sadler
1611

Dates of inspection: 26 – 29 March 2001

Inspection number: 184849

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (Selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Abbey Place
Faversham
Kent

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A H Osborne ARIBA

Date of previous inspection: 1 – 5 May 1995

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1611	Paul Sadler	Registered inspector		<p>The sort of school it is</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>The quality of teaching</p> <p>The quality of curricular and other opportunities</p> <p>The quality of leadership and management</p> <p>School improvement</p>
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23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History Equality of opportunity	
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and Design English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School is a mixed, selective grammar school situated in the small town of Faversham in East Kent. It has 811 pupils on roll, 423 boys and 388 girls. Of these, 190 are in the sixth form. As such, the school is of average size, both nationally and in respect of selective schools. The school is a Foundation school. Pupils take a selection test in Year 6, as a result of which approximately 25% can apply for admission to selective schools in their area. For a period to 1998, this system resulted in the school gaining insufficient first choice pupils to fill its places, which were then made up by second and third preferences and appeals. The current Years 7 and 8 are made up of first preferences alone. The school occupies one compact site near the town centre. Shortly after the previous inspection in 1995, major fires destroyed much of the accommodation for science and music. These have been rebuilt and extended, as have new facilities for design & technology and art, the dining hall and some general teaching rooms. Surplus accommodation has been refurbished as a sixth form centre; this is due to open in April 2001.

As would be expected in a selective school, many of the key indicators diverge significantly from national averages. In 2000, 2% were entitled to free school meals (national average 17.8%), 0.5%, a very low figure, spoke English as an additional language; 4.1% (35 pupils of which 7 are in the sixth form) were recorded as having special educational needs (SEN) including three pupils (0.15%) with statements. The national averages for these indicators of SEN are 19.3% and 2.5% respectively. The school has only seven (0.1%) pupils of minority ethnic heritage, of these four are of Chinese ethnicity.. As a selective school, the attainment on entry of the pupils is very high, all having achieved at least the National expectation of Level 4 in tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. However, more detailed study of these test results and others conducted by the school leads to the conclusion that attainment on entry is below average when compared with selective schools nationally.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School is a good and improving school. Very good teaching and a strong ethos for learning promote the attainment of high standards by all pupils throughout the school. It cares for its pupils very well. Leadership and management are good, with a strong commitment to pursue appropriate priorities. The school, including the sixth form, provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is very good throughout the school
- The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are very good; behaviour is excellent
- A positive ethos for learning promotes high standards of achievement
- Provision for the care of pupils is very good
- Relationships between pupils and with staff are generally very good
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are very good

What could be improved

- The delegation of responsibilities to senior managers
- The provision for personal, health and social education, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form
- The consistency and use of assessment, especially at Key Stage 3
- The annual report to parents on pupils' progress and the organisation of meetings to discuss this

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1995. Since that time improvement has been good in spite of the major setback of two fires. Results, especially at GCSE, have improved at a faster rate than nationally, including in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teaching has improved very considerably, with about one lesson in one hundred now being unsatisfactory rather than close to one in ten as was the case at the last inspection. Specific weaknesses raised in the last report have been addressed. For instance, at that time there were weaknesses in the writing and spelling of a core of pupils. These have been eradicated.

The key issues raised at the last inspection have been largely, but not fully, met. Arrangements for collective worship now meet legal requirements in full, as does the provision of design and technology at Key Stage 3 and of religious education in the sixth form. Teaching now meets the needs of pupils with differing levels of ability, including those with special educational needs. The seriousness with which this latter matter is now treated in this selective school is commendable. Slower progress has been made in developing the use of information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum, and in promoting the use of the library as a more effective resource for teaching and learning. However, plans to tackle both of these issues are at an advanced stage. Some inconsistency remains in the monitoring of policies, especially those for assessment and reporting. Overall, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

When compared with all schools, the attainment of pupils is very high. Grade A* represents results in the top five per cent of all schools nationally. In relation to selective schools, both attainment on entry and at GCSE are a little below average. However, pupils' attainment improves at a faster rate than nationally; results at GCSE have improved consistently over the last four years. At A level results have been consistently good. At Key Stage 3 pupils achieve very highly in mathematics, where in 2000 all pupils attained at least the higher level 6, and highly in English and mathematics, where the proportions were 90 per cent and 92 per cent respectively. These figures represent a significant improvement over time, especially in science. Boys and girls, unusually, achieve equally well at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, although at GCSE girls outperform boys in science, design and technology, geography and German. The best GCSE results are attained in English language, mathematics, German and religious education. At A level, almost all students attain a pass and around 50 per cent gain the higher grades A and B; exceptions are biology and chemistry where the results are a little lower. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, show good achievement. Pupils respond confidently to questions and their written work is of high quality, with extended, analytical work written in good English. They use specialist terminology accurately; high order literacy skills are well developed. While the same is true of numeracy in mathematics, standards across the curriculum are lower. Standards in PE, especially among groups of pupils at Key Stage 4, are also lower. The school has set appropriate targets for future achievement, although an element of caution has been applied in this exercise.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are positive about the school and are keen to learn
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils behave with courtesy and consideration. They pay attention to the teaching and support each other's learning
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are mature and generally have good relationships with each other and with their teachers
Attendance	Good. Attendance is higher than average, there is no unauthorised absence and little unpunctuality.

Pupils of all ages have very mature attitudes to school. They are able to take initiative, for instance in helping younger pupils, and take personal responsibility for their actions. There is very little bullying. Boys and girls get on well together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The very small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds feel a full part of the school community. Pupils get fully involved in all school activities and get on well with their teachers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very good	Very 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 and learning is very good overall. It is good at Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Over 98 per cent of lessons seen were at least satisfactory. Over 78 per cent were good or better, with 36 per cent being very good or excellent. This represents very considerable improvement since the last inspection. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science the quality of the teaching reflects that across the school as whole; in fact there is little variation in quality between subjects. Strengths include teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject, their management of pupils and their expectations of them, the pace of lessons and the use of time and resources. Questioning is used very well by most teachers. Where weaknesses exist these generally concern the use of assessment at Key Stage 3 and over-lengthy talking by the teacher. Pupils enter the school with good basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Literacy particularly is further developed by a strong emphasis on correct spellings, especially of technical terms, and on grammatical accuracy. Numeracy is well-developed in mathematics but there is less emphasis on it in other subjects. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils including the most and least able.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Pupils can study the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and at A level a few other subjects, but little beyond these. All statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The school has begun to take this issue more seriously and has made good progress in improving provision

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are few such pupils. Their good command of English is such that they cannot be identified in class.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for personal, spiritual, moral and social development is good; that for cultural development is satisfactory
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Arrangements to promote good behaviour and attendance are very good. Monitoring and support of pupils' academic and personal development are good

Overall, the school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. The curriculum is appropriately demanding for the pupils. Provision of extra-curricular activities is good, but that for personal, social and health education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is insufficient. Some pupils at Key Stage 4 do not have sufficient teaching of information and communications technology (ICT) leading to unsatisfactory achievement. Assemblies and collective worship are very good; the school promotes a positive moral climate that encourages responsible behaviour. Monitoring of pupils achievement at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good. Pupils have limited opportunities to explore the range of cultures in British society.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher offers strong leadership. Other key staff support him well but their effectiveness is limited by lack of clarity in their responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are experienced, efficient and supportive. They meet their statutory responsibilities
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Much progress has been made recently, but there is room for improvement in the monitoring of teaching and of some policies.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are used well to support the school's priorities. Its application of best value principles is very good.

The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is good. In particular, recent developments in the accommodation are very effective. The headteacher and governors have set a clear direction for the school, with an appropriate set of priorities including raising standards of attainment and improving the accommodation. Improving provision for ICT is the next priority. Financial planning and control are very good. Weaknesses in the allocation of responsibilities to senior staff limit their effectiveness, especially in the use and analysis of assessment and in reporting to parents. As stated above, the governors apply the principles of best value very well in using the school's resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The quality of teaching• The progress made by pupils• The expectations of hard work• The leadership and management• The care of pupils by the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework (some think there is too much, others too little)• The range of activities outside school• The information provided, specifically on pupils' progress• The meetings to discuss pupils' progress

The inspection team agrees that those things that please parents most are strengths of the school. Of those things they would like to see improved, we find that both homework provision and the range of extra-curricular activities are good, better than is found in most schools. We agree that the annual report to parents on pupils' progress could be improved and, on indirect evidence, that this also applies to the organisation of meetings to discuss pupils' progress. The school provides good general information to parents but that on specific issues and about individual pupils could be improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In 2000 at the end of Key Stage 3, age 14, pupils' performance in national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was very high - in the top five per cent nationally - when compared with all schools. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' attainment was above average in mathematics, and below average in English and science. In mathematics, 85% of pupils attained the high level 7 or above; the figures for English and science were 22% and 32% respectively. Between 1999 and 2000 there were dramatic improvements in the proportion attaining level 6 and above in English and science, bringing performance in these subjects more into line with mathematics. Pupils show good achievement at Key Stage 3; data show that pupils at the school make better than average progress at Key Stage 3 when compared with similar schools. Boys and girls make equally good progress, in fact there is very little difference between the attainment of either gender, a pattern which has existed for a number of years. The numbers of pupils with special educational needs, and with English as an additional language, are too small to draw conclusions from data, but scrutiny of their written work and observation in lessons suggests that they also make good progress.
2. At Key Stage 4, standards are similarly high. In 2000, 96.5 per cent of pupils attained at least five GCSE passes at the higher grade C and above. This compares with a national average of 47.4 per cent. The figure is slightly lower than the national average for selective schools of 97.5 per cent, although quirks in the statistics lead to a conclusion that the results of this school are, in fact, broadly in line with those of selective schools nationally. The school's results have improved at a faster rate than nationally over the last four years. Taking the judgement that pupils enter the school at below average levels of attainment for selective schools, it can be concluded that pupils make good progress at this school.
3. In 2000 in English language GCSE, all pupils attained passes at grades A*-C; of these, 53.1 per cent attained the highest grades A* and A. In mathematics, all pupils attained A*-C, 31.5 per cent attaining A* and A. In science, the equivalent figures were 92.8 per cent and 33.3 per cent respectively. Other subjects where the results were notably good included religious studies, geography, English literature and computer studies, whereas results in design and technology, music and PE were weaker, especially in respect of the proportion achieving the highest grades. Overall, standards at all key stages are well above national averages although they are closer to the average in these latter three subjects. In contrast to Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, girls significantly outperform boys in GCSE. In 2000 this was most notably the case in design and technology, science, geography and German.
4. At A level, standards are also high. Pass rates are well above the national average and have been consistently so over time. Individual students achieve on average results two grades higher, across three subjects, than nationally. In 2000, results were especially impressive in art and design, geography, mathematics and history. In these subjects, at least half the candidates attained the highest grades A and B, and almost all achieved a pass at least at grade E. Although results in other subjects fluctuated, the numbers of candidates were too small to conclude that any particular one was weak. National data shows that overall students maintain at least average progress between GCSE and A level; in some subjects including geography and history it is better than this.
5. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, a notable feature of pupils' work is the quality and extent of their written work. Often it is analytical, written in good quality English and addresses the subject at an appropriately high level. Examples included analyses of the impact of the media in sociology A level and of the siting of settlements in GCSE geography. A less strong feature is the presentation of pupils' work. For instance, in GCSE science, skills of drawing graphs were roughly in line with those found in all schools nationally. This reflects the fact that development of numeracy is less consistent throughout the school than for literacy, where such development is good.

6. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflected those attained in examinations. Extended written work of a standard well above that found nationally was found throughout the school, especially from Year 9 onwards. In most subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers' own assessments consistently place the majority of pupils at least at the higher level 6 by the end of Key Stage 3. The exception is physical education (PE), where pupils' attainments are generally at or below the national expectation. In 2000, boys significantly outperformed girls in PE, the only subject showing a difference in attainment between the genders. The standards suggested by these results were also seen in lessons.
7. Pupils achieve well. Scrutiny of their written work showed steady improvement in its quality, range and sophistication. This applied to all pupils, including those with special needs. Pupils write with increasing powers of analysis and using a wider range of varied sources. In history, for instance, pupils moved from pictorial representation of an event to analysis of its causes within the space of a few months. In Year 8 mathematics, pupils could easily calculate the volume of a cylinder of triangular cross-section without assistance. In science, they moved from discovery of new patterns to the application of formulae within a few weeks at Key Stage 3. In lessons the very good teaching, coupled with enthusiasm for learning meant lesson objectives were usually achieved with all pupils achieving well for their ability. Achievement is very high in mathematics and geography and is high in all other subjects except design and technology and in PE at Key Stage 4 for those pupils not following a GCSE course. In these subjects achievement is sound.
8. The school has set appropriate targets for its own performance. On occasions these are a little cautious, for instance the target for pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A*-C in 2002 is 97 per cent, although staff believe that this group can achieve 100 per cent.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. They arrive punctually for lessons, work hard and adopt a very conscientious approach. Students listen carefully and tackle both written and practical tasks with confidence and enthusiasm. They normally show very high levels of concentration, although a few students in Years 11 and 13 occasionally become inattentive. A strong feature is the way students help one another when working in pairs or small groups; this is particularly noticeable in physical education lessons. Very good examples of investigative work and the ability to hypothesise were observed, with some outstanding examples in science. Students' positive attitudes contribute significantly to high standards and achievement and have improved since the last inspection. To quote a Year 7 pupil in an autobiographical essay 'It's great to be young!'
10. Behaviour is excellent. Students are clearly aware of the standards expected and co-operate fully to ensure this is achieved. They are polite and respectful to staff and visitors. A consistently high standard of behaviour is seen in lessons and during other activities in and around the school. This contributes well to the purposeful learning environment and to the smooth running of the school. Bullying rarely occurs. Students are trustworthy and can be relied upon to take good care of materials and equipment. Last year there were no permanent exclusions and only four fixed term exclusions. This is well below the level in most secondary schools. The small number of pupils from ethnic minority groups play a full part in the life and work of the school.
11. Relationships and pupils' personal development are very good. There is a friendly and purposeful atmosphere in the school. This is helped by the good personal relationships that exist between most pupils, and with their teachers. Sixth formers act as prefects and also assist with learning and social events for younger students. Personal development is enhanced by the many opportunities given to students to plan and organise their work with a strong emphasis on investigative skills. The library and computer facilities are well used at lunchtimes and after school. Many fund raising events are organised by students to assist home and overseas charities. There are over 30 extra curricular clubs and societies that enable students to develop special interests in music, sport and many other activities. Learning across the curriculum is well supported by the full programme of educational visits, including exchange arrangements with schools in France, Germany and Holland.

Inspection evidence does not support the views of a minority of parents who feel that insufficient opportunities are provided outside lessons.

- Attendance is good. Very high attendance levels are consistently seen in Years 7 to 9. Last year attendance in Year 11 was below 90%. This was due to the lengthy illness of 3 students who were helped by arrangements for home study. An outstanding feature is that unauthorised absence hardly ever arises. Students have a very good punctuality record although occasional problems arise due to the late arrival of trains. During the school day, students arrive very quickly to lessons, thus ensuring the maximum time is available for learning. All these features make an important contribution to academic achievement.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is good at Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Over 98 per cent of lessons seen were at least satisfactory. Over 78 per cent were good or better, with 36 per cent being very good or excellent. This represents very considerable improvement since the last inspection, when nearly 10 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory, and only 10 per cent was very good or excellent. Strengths include teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject which enables them to develop pupils' understanding of sophisticated concepts, for example in a Year 10 RE lesson where the difference between praying through the symbolism of an icon such as a rosary, rather than praying to it, was carefully explained, leading to rapid gains in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Many lessons were conducted at a fast, almost relentless, pace, often through the use of sophisticated questioning techniques such as in a Year 7 English lesson, and a Year 13 PE theory lesson where students' understanding of the psychology of skill acquisition in sport was developed by breaking the concepts into small steps which the students could grasp. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, for instance in a Year 7 science lesson where the teacher expected pupils to find the mathematical relationship between power, current and voltage through simple experimental observation. They did not let him down.
- Further strengths include the management of pupils and the excellent rapport which most teachers have with them. Use of humour, together with good knowledge of individual strengths and weaknesses enable teachers to help all pupils achieve and learn well. The latter feature is especially strong at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well, and also learn at a good pace. Lessons are well-planned, for instance a Year 11 mathematics lesson where two groups of pupils pursued different tasks appropriate to their level of understanding. The teacher moved smoothly between groups of pupils offering praise and support as appropriate. A laptop computer was used to demonstrate the impact of changing variables in different graphical functions. Time is used well by both teachers and pupils; lessons begin and end on time and little time is wasted during them. Homework is used well; it is appropriate and demanding although some weakness in its coordination means individual pupils can be overloaded on occasions. Pupils arrive at the school having a good grasp of the basic skills needed for learning. These are further developed, especially by good teaching of specialist terminology used in the different subjects, with strong emphasis on their correct spelling, for example 'simulation' and 'endothermic' in a Year 10 science lesson. In English at Key Stage 3, pupils are taught more sophisticated writing concepts such as the use of idiom, metaphor and analogy. Numeracy is also developed satisfactorily, although here there is somewhat less emphasis outside mathematics. For instance in science more attention might be paid to teaching the accurate presentation of graphs.
- In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form assessment is used well by teachers to set individual targets for pupils, who have a very good understanding of their own attainment and of what they need to do to improve. In this upper part of the school marking is used well, with many detailed comments on what pupils need to do next, for instance in A level science. This is a weaker feature at Key Stage 3, where data available when pupils enter Year 7 is used insufficiently to set individual targets. Although some are set, they tend to be vague, such as 'improve my handwriting', without specific teaching as to how to do so. Although it is variable in quality, marking is sometimes less rigorous at Key Stage 3, with cursory comments and the use of grading systems not fully understood by pupils. Overall, the use of assessment is satisfactory. In almost all lessons strengths in the

teaching outweigh weaknesses, but some lessons are rather turgid, with over-long expositions by the teacher during which some pupils become bored. These features are more commonly found at Key Stage 3.

16. As a result of the strong teaching, pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding rapidly. They work hard and with great enthusiasm. They collaborate well and help each other to become better independent learners. All pupils, boys and girls across the range of ability represented in the school, make equally good progress in their learning.

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

17. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided is satisfactory throughout the school. All pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 receive the full National Curriculum, with the exception of some pupils at Key Stage 4 who receive insufficient teaching of Information and communications technology (ICT). All pupils, including those in the sixth form, also follow an appropriate curriculum in religious education. Pupils are taught for an appropriate time, 25 hours each week. The timetable is organised on a two week cycle and is efficient. There is, however, unevenness in the distribution of lessons in some subjects. The time for PE in Key Stage 4, for those pupils who do not study the subject at GCSE, is only just adequate. As a result, standards for these pupils in PE are lower than might be expected.
18. Few subjects are taught that lie outside those in the National Curriculum, although pupils have the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages. At Key Stage 4, pupils study for nine full GCSEs and one short course, normally in ICT or design and technology. No other examination courses such as GNVQ are offered. At 'A' level, choice is restricted to National Curriculum subjects, sociology, media studies, economics and AS level citizenship. Again, no other examinations are offered. Nevertheless, the breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum are satisfactory as the most appropriate courses and forms of accreditation for pupils of this ability are offered. There is satisfactory provision for the small proportion of pupils with SEN, who also have appropriate access to the full curriculum. The teaching makes demands on pupils of all abilities, but in some subjects the needs of the most able among the school's population are not met in full.
19. Provision for extra curricular activities is good. There is a range of good quality, varied opportunities including sport, music, drama and pupils' hobbies and interests. These include competitive games against other schools, and major productions. The Christian Union, 'Spirit Level', is especially effective. This is led by sixth form students and gives many opportunities for pupils to learn about personal responsibility and citizenship. There is a good range of trips and off-site activities, many of them overseas.
20. Provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. The quality of what is provided is good, and at Key Stage 3 it is adequate in quantity, but in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form regular opportunities for pupils to develop these aspects of their understanding are too limited. Sex education is satisfactory as pupils are taught important aspects at Key Stage 3, but older pupils have insufficient opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding in line with their increasing maturity and experience. Pupils receive satisfactory careers guidance. In the sixth form they are well prepared to make applications for entrance to higher education. The local community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning, through provision of work experience, visiting speakers especially for the sixth form, and support for school initiatives. There are satisfactory links with partner institutions although these have diminished somewhat recently. Collaborative A level teaching with a nearby high school is now restricted mainly to PE, and the school no longer trains student teachers, although it wishes to restart this if arrangements are more appropriate.
21. Provision for pupils' personal development, including that for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. All pupils experience a daily assembly which includes an act of collective worship, an improvement on the last inspection. The assemblies are of good quality and are often

led by pupils. They generally have a moral or environmental theme. Other pupils respond well, listening carefully and responding, for instance by applauding. Assemblies are also used to celebrate pupils' successes. There is a good moral climate that does not tolerate repressive behaviour and encourages responsible relationships through the sex education programme. The many extra-curricular activities offer good opportunities for social development, as does the trust shown by allowing pupils to use the school buildings throughout the day. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered in the teaching of a number of subjects, including English, mathematics, history, music, art and religious education. A weakness is the limited opportunity for pupils to learn about and experience the life of other cultures present in British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

22. Very good provision is made for students' health, safety and welfare. There are excellent arrangements for the dealing with any child protection issues that arise. Following the last inspection, steps were taken to deal with shortcomings relating to the maintenance of accident records. Illness and first aid arrangements are dealt with competently by qualified first-aiders. However, the location of the medical room remains a concern, although governors have recently approved plans for alterations to the building to resolve this issue. Appropriate arrangements are included in the health education programme relating to sex education and the dangers from drug abuse.
23. A strong emphasis is placed on the quality of pastoral care. Tutors and pastoral staff know students well and ensure that they are well supported and readily able to raise any individual concerns. A counsellor who spends a day in the school each week augments this provision. Students are well advised about induction into Year 7 and on subject options choices made in Year 9. Good opportunities are provided to enable Year 11 students to take part in work experience. Older students receive detailed support and advice about careers, further education and higher education.
24. Arrangements for monitoring academic progress and personal development are satisfactory. This includes regular reviews by subject teachers and form tutors. The termly commendation and referral reports to parents on attainment and effort in each subject are discussed in detail with each student. The system includes the setting of targets for improvement. There is, however, variability in the quality of the monitoring of target setting which is effective in about half of the subject areas (including mathematics and science) but weaker in others. At Key Stage 3, insufficient use is made of pupils' attainments at Key Stage 2 to set targets at an early stage.
25. Arrangements for promoting high standards of behaviour and good attendance are very good. Registers are completed accurately and there are effective systems for following up any unexplained absences. Parents are familiar with the school requirements and co-operate fully so that very few concerns arise on attendance and punctuality. On behaviour, there is an effective rewards system in place. A good example of this is the special initiative successfully introduced earlier this year that helped to eliminate behaviour problems that had arisen with some Year 8 students last year. The school policies include appropriate anti-bullying provisions. Sanctions for dealing with misbehaviour, including detentions, are operated fairly and successfully.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

26. Parents are pleased with the school, especially with students' progress made and the standards of attainment. They feel that the school has high expectations and that the students work hard. Parents indicate that behaviour is good and that very good provision is made for students' welfare and personal development. They think that teaching is good and commend leadership and management. Inspectors agree with these positive views, especially the strong provision made for students' welfare, the high standards of behaviour and the high expectations of staff.
27. Some parents would like to see an improvement in aspects of communications with parents. A minority express concerns about homework arrangements and feel that insufficient activities are provided outside lessons. Inspection evidence indicates that most of the communications with

parents are good. However, the annual written reports and the arrangements for the consultation meetings about students' progress are less effective. Homework makes an important contribution to learning and the contact book system works well. Good opportunities are provided for students to take part in extra curricular activities and in educational visits in this country and abroad.

28. The school has satisfactory links with parents. The high quality prospectus and the information given to parents about induction of pupils into Year 7 are most helpful. Regular newsletters are sent about school events and achievements. The governors' annual report gives a full account of the school's position and fully meets legal requirements. Very good consultation takes place with parents about subject options for GCSE, the sixth form, careers and higher education.
29. Each term, parents are sent a written commendation and referrals report showing students' progress in each subject. This enables parents to be well informed and represents an improvement since the last inspection. At the parents' meeting prior to the inspection, a number of the 45 parents present criticised the annual consultation meeting with teachers to discuss progress, especially as the time allocated for subject discussions is only 3 minutes. This aspect and the quality of the annual written reports warrant re-examination. There is an inconsistent approach in such reports. There is scope for better information in most subjects including the description of work covered, attainment in relation to national curriculum levels, targets for improvement and about religious education in the sixth form.
30. Parents' contributions to the life and work of the school are good. They give very good support to the work that students undertake at home. This has improved since the last inspection, especially the regular monitoring of the homework contact books. The Friends of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School sponsor awards for student achievement and service. They organise a number of fund raising activities, including a summer fair. Overall, parents play little part in daily school activities. Parents are consulted on issues such as the home/school contract, uniforms and survey of parents' views of the school. 55% of parents replied to this survey, the results of which have been carefully considered. Nearly a quarter of respondents did not feel that the school worked closely enough with parents. Governors have decided that action is needed to see how this position can be improved.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

31. The present headteacher took up his post in 1997. He has established clear and appropriate priorities for development. These are: to raise standards, to improve the quality of the accommodation and to improve the school's provision for information and communications technology. The first two priorities have been tackled with considerable success; the final one is now in hand. In raising standards, the quality of teaching has improved and the high academic standards that lie at the heart of the school's aims and values are explicit in its work. This is recognised by parents and pupils. There is clear educational direction, and leadership is good.
32. The delegation of responsibilities to senior staff is poor; it is a significant weakness. While these staff carry out their responsibilities to best effect within the constraints that exist, some are ineffective. In at least one case, there is significant overload of responsibility. In others, responsibilities within a particular area are shared in ways that do not enable effective coordination and purposeful development. Examples include assessment and reporting, and the coordination of personal, social and health education.
33. The governing body is very effective. Governors are committed to the school and, in the main, are experienced. They share the same values and priorities as the headteacher and support him well in achieving them. Their business is carried out effectively and efficiently, with an appropriate committee structure and meetings supplied with agendas, minutes and background papers. They meet their statutory responsibilities. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs has a clear understanding of his role and has provided good support to the coordinator. A weakness has been in their provision of support and induction for the new headteacher in his new role. He was left to identify this for himself. Overall, they have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have taken some difficult decisions, such as to remove Latin from

the curriculum. They also supported the school to exceptionally good effect in its recovery from fires in the mid 1990s, securing good quality replacement accommodation and resources.

34. Until recently, the culture of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching was underdeveloped. To some extent this remains so, but progress is being made. A performance management policy has been agreed and is to be implemented shortly. A line management structure has been put in place and in some cases regular meetings take place between managers and those they manage. In other cases, however, there is a lack of trust that impedes progress. This is particularly true of the links between senior and middle managers. Overall, these areas of the school's work are satisfactory but there is room for improvement.
35. As already stated, the school has appropriate priorities and has pursued them effectively. There is a high level of shared commitment and, with the exception of those areas affected by weak senior management structures, the capacity to succeed. Development planning is comprehensive and links between senior management and subject and other middle management responsibility are clear. The plan focuses on the delivery of the school's key priorities, but this is not always clear to the external reader. The identification of resources and the existence of clear, unambiguous success criteria against which to monitor progress could also be improved.
36. Teachers are well-qualified and experienced; effective structures exist to identify, deliver and monitor their appropriate further professional development. The school is also well-served by effective support staff, especially technical support and those concerned with the administration of the school. The school has recently employed, for the first time, teaching assistants to support pupils with statements of special educational need. These are not yet deployed to best effect. There are currently no newly qualified teachers on the staff, but structures are in place to support such teachers when appointed. Formerly the school had significant involvement in the training of new teachers. Currently this has ceased for financial and logistic reasons, but the structures are in place to support such trainees.
37. Financial planning is very effective. The school bursar is experienced and well-qualified. Decisions are closely linked to educational priorities and specific grant is used well for the intended purpose. Spending is carefully monitored and external sources of funding are well-used. For instance, a 'Millennium Appeal' towards new accommodation raised nearly £250 000. There has been significant improvement to the accommodation since the last inspection. After the fires, areas for music and science were rebuilt and extended, a new art and technology facility has been built and new dining facilities created. These developments are functional but effective. In the older parts of the school, however, some rooms are small and inadequately cleaned and narrow corridors are very crowded at change of lessons. In other respects the school is well resourced although the provision of resources for ICT remains relatively weak. Plans exist to address this.
38. The school applies the principles of best value very well. The most cost-effective solutions are sought, often through a tendering process. The school retains the role of 'responsible officer' on the governing body, who scrutinises spending decisions and accounting procedures in order to ensure financial probity.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. Much of the school's work is effective and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. However the following actions should be taken in order to ensure continued further improvement:

- (1) Review and reallocate the responsibilities of senior managers in order to ensure:
 - That individuals do not have an excessive workload
 - That there is clear responsibility for, and coordination of, key areas of the school's work including assessment and reporting, and personal, social and health education.
 - That line management structures have the confidence of middle managers and other staff (Paragraphs 32 and 34)
- (2) Increase the provision of personal, social and health education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in order to ensure that young people have the necessary knowledge and skills in these areas. (Paragraph 20)
- (3) Improve the consistency and use of assessment, especially at Key Stage 3, in order to ensure that pupils and teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' attainments and what they need to do to improve by:
 - Making better use of assessment data on entry
 - Ensuring there is a clear marking policy, linked to the national curriculum, that is applied consistently
 - Setting clear, demanding, achievable and measurable targets for pupils that are reviewed on a regular basis. (Paragraphs 15 and 24)
- (4) Improve communications with parents about their children's progress by:
 - Ensuring that the annual report on progress includes key information in all subjects
 - Ensuring there is consistency of judgement in areas that overlap subjects
 - Reviewing the arrangements for meeting with parents to discuss pupils' progress, including consultation on the parents' preferred approach. (Paragraphs 27 and 29)

In addition, the school should ensure that all pupils at Key Stage 4 are taught sufficient ICT to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. (Paragraphs 17 and 104)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	176
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	70

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4.5	31.3	42.6	19.3	0.6	0.6	0.0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	621	190
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	14	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	23	7

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

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	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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
	2000	62	67	129

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	62	62
	Girls	65	66	66
	Total	127	128	128
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	98(100)	99(99)	99(97)
	National	63(63)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	83(54)	99(98)	91(67)
	National	28(28)	42(38)	30(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	62	62
	Girls	67	67	67
	Total	129	129	129
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100(100)	100(100)	100(98)
	National	64(64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	90(90)	100(92)	92(79)
	National	31(31)	39(37)	29(28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	65	49	114

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	62	63	64
	Girls	48	48	49
	Total	110	111	113
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	96(94)	97(98)	99(98)
	National	47.4(46.6)	90.6(90.9)	95.6(95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	57
	National	38.4

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
	2000	56	76	132

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	24.9	20.8	22.8	3.6	4.2	4.0
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

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

International Bacculaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Bacculaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/a
	National		76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	759
Any other minority ethnic group	7

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	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	46.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	208

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	30.2
Key Stage 4	21.3

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1985890
Total expenditure	2044471
Expenditure per pupil	2514
Balance brought forward from previous year	108041
Balance carried forward to next year	49460

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF PARENTS AND CARERS

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	811
Number of questionnaires returned	221

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39.4	49.8	8.6	0.9	0.5
My child is making good progress in school.	41.6	52.9	5.4	0.0	0.9
Behaviour in the school is good.	19.9	67.9	5.4	1.4	5.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18.1	57.0	14.5	7.2	3.6
The teaching is good.	30.3	60.2	3.2	0.5	5.9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38.0	44.8	14.0	1.4	0.9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49.3	39.8	6.9	2.7	0.9
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59.3	36.2	4.5	0.0	0.9
The school works closely with parents.	25.3	54.8	14.0	4.5	0.9
The school is well led and managed.	38.5	44.8	4.5	0.9	10.9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35.7	50.7	5.4	2.7	5.9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24.9	45.7	10.0	6.3	13.6

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

ENGLISH

40. Pupils come into the school with attainment levels well above national averages, but lower than those found in many selective schools. In the national tests taken at the end of the Key Stage 3 in 2000, the percentage of pupils who achieved level 6 or above was 83 per cent, with 22 per cent achieving level 7 or above. These results were very high, in the top five per cent, when compared with all schools nationally, but a little below average when compared with selective schools. The test results were an improvement on the 1999 results, but there is no significant trend over the past four years. Boys and girls achieved similar results, with boys doing better than expected nationally. The results at the end of Key Stage 3 are good in relation to those obtained by the same pupils when they entered the school. At the end of Key Stage 4, 53 per cent of pupils obtained A* and A grades in the English GCSE examination in 2000, compared with 11 per cent nationally, and 100 per cent achieved an A* to C grade. These results are very high, and also compare favourably with pupils in selective schools. Again, this represents good achievement in relation to results at the end of Key Stage 3. In the sixth form students can choose to follow A level courses in English literature, English language and media studies. In the English literature and language examinations in 2000, A and B grades, and also the pass rate at grades A-E, were above the national averages, although below those for selective schools.
41. Standards in work seen during the inspection are also very high at the end of Key Stage 3. The highest attaining pupils write assured, extended, accurate pieces of both factual and imaginative writing. They also respond well to what they read, and they are introduced to techniques of literary analysis from Year 7. The course folder of one Year 9 pupil contained a particularly impressive essay comparing poems by Owen and Sassoon. The pupil wrote analytically and with real insight, and she also wrote a particularly moving piece imagining that she was a soldier in the trenches during the First World War. Standards of work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are very high. Pupils continue to make good progress through Key Stage 4, particularly in the skills of literary interpretation and analysis. By the end of the Key Stage the highest attaining pupils can write short stories which are well structured and which use techniques such as irony and imagery to interest the reader. They can analyse plot, character and themes in novels and plays and can understand and explain why poets employ certain techniques such as alliteration and use of metaphor. Lower attaining pupils can also interpret literary texts well, although in less depth. In the sixth form, standards are very high. Students achieve well on these courses, and they learn to analyse the use of language, as well as authors' intentions, closely and accurately. One Year 13 group seen during the inspection week was discussing Hamlet's attitudes to and relationships with, women. They showed good insights into Hamlet's character and could quote from the text to support their views. Written work is often extended, well expressed and accurate.
42. At all levels, the department promotes good listening skills in a variety of ways, including organising group and pair work in lessons. Pupils listen well, and there is a climate of mutual respect: when people talk, others listen. Pupils' speaking skills are developed through discussions and presentations. In some lessons observed, pupils spoke confidently, evidently enjoying expressing their views. They were persuasive in what they said and they used a wide range of vocabulary appropriately. On other occasions, pupils were self-conscious and a little hesitant when speaking in lessons, and they used a more restricted range of vocabulary than they do when they write.
43. Teaching of English throughout the school is good, with some excellent and very good teaching, particularly in the sixth form. There is some teaching that is satisfactory rather than good, but there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Where teaching is very good, teachers have high expectations of what pupils and students can do, and they challenge them to think deeply. In a sixth form English language advanced level group, the teacher's careful explanations of what pidgin and Creole languages are and their functions, interested and motivated the students. Her enthusiasm for the subject was infectious and this was underpinned by her challenging questioning of students and her planned use of resources. As

a consequence, the students made very good progress in the lesson. Where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good, the teacher does not always take opportunities offered to give pupils targeted, specific feedback about what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Pace in lessons is sometimes a little leisurely and the teaching is a little unfocussed. This results in pupils making progress that is satisfactory, but not better. Marking and assessment of pupils' work at Key Stage 3 is inconsistent. Some work is helpfully marked, telling pupils what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. Other work is marked with rather generalised comments. National Curriculum levels are not widely revealed to pupils, and as a consequence they are often unsure about the current level at which they are working. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, work is marked much more consistently. Teachers indicate the relevant examination grade and suggestions for improvement are closely matched to examination criteria. As a result, students are clear about what they need to do in order to obtain a higher grade. Teachers are beginning to use performance data to identify underachievement and to set targets for individual pupils.

44. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They work well together in groups and they usually concentrate well in lessons. Most pupils enjoy English and they work with a sense of purpose in lessons. These attitudes contribute to good levels of learning. In one lesson seen, Year 7 pupils were working in groups designing a game using the story and characters from Alan Garner's 'The Weirstone of Brisingamen'. The pupils worked well together. Some pupils had taken good initiative and had prepared some materials for their game, voluntarily, before the lesson. They enjoyed the work and made good progress, particularly in their social education, in the lesson. There are lessons where pupils are rather passive learners. In these lessons their behaviour and attitudes are good, but they are not particularly responsive, and when asked questions they respond with rather underdeveloped answers.
45. The English curriculum is appropriately planned, although opportunities for drama are limited by the space available. There is a traditional emphasis on using literature as a means of teaching language. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development, particularly in their spiritual and moral education. One particular project that stimulates the pupils to think deeply about profound issues is the visit to Ypres, planned jointly with the history department. Pupils write very sensitively about the experiences of soldiers in the First World War trenches.
46. The head of department provides good leadership and management. She and other members of the department have a reflective, open attitude to their practice. The department is committed to providing opportunities for individual pupils to develop their skills and knowledge through lunchtime and after school sessions. They have started to use performance data analytically in setting pupils' targets. The department's schemes of work and policy documents give helpful guidance and advice. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is an area that needs to be developed, as is the use of assessment at Key Stage 3.
47. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have risen and teaching has improved. Schemes of work have been completely revised and now include the use of computers in each Year. There has been some progress in putting in place a whole-school literacy policy, however this is still in the developmental stage, and there is not yet consistency in the approach to teaching literacy skills across the school. Some very good opportunities for writing in a range of styles were observed during the inspection in a number of subjects, but there is a variety of practice. For example, the geography and physical education departments display key words, but these are not found in some other curriculum areas. The English department has identified reasonable developmental priorities and is well set to improve further.

MATHEMATICS

49. Attainment on entry to the school is well above average. In 2000, standards in mathematics in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were very high, in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The proportions of pupils achieving level 5 or above and level 6 or above are very high compared to the national average, with boys performing better than girls. In comparison with the other core subjects, the proportion of pupils achieving level 6 or above is greater in mathematics than English and science. In comparison with similar schools the proportion of pupils achieving level 6 or above is well above average. The proportion of pupils achieving level 7 or above is broadly in line with the average for schools in similar contexts. Overall in 2000, pupils' test scores are very high in mathematics in comparison with the national average and above average for schools in similar contexts. In 2000, average points scores in mathematics are better than English and science. Since the last report, the mathematics department has been adding good value in terms of the improvement in test scores between Year 7 and the end of Key Stage 3, at a rate better than that achieved by the average school nationally.
50. In 2000, at Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE mathematics grades A* to C were very high in comparison with the national average. The average points scores for 2000 in mathematics are below those of English but better than combined science double award. Comparing average points scores at Key Stage 3 in 1998 with those obtained by the same pupils in GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000 the value added by the mathematics department over the key stage is satisfactory. Over the last three years, results in mathematics have improved at a faster rate than the national average.
51. At the end of the sixth form, all students obtained pass grades A to E at A level in 2000, with the average result above that for the school. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A and B increased significantly compared to the previous year. More than half of the pupils entered improved their grades when compared to levels of prior attainment at GCSE. Pupils were also as successful in further mathematics and at mathematics AS level, although pupil numbers are small.
52. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above average for all pupils and cover all aspects of the National Curriculum. Pupils over the key stage use and apply mathematics, extend a concept and articulate their thinking through set tasks included in the scheme of work. Year 7 pupils were observed developing an investigation into the sequence generated from chairs arranged about increasing numbers of tables leading to a mathematical equation which they could justify for any number of tables. High attaining pupils in Year 8 working in groups, were observed completing posters on how to calculate the volume of a prism, correctly incorporating Pythagoras' theorem, in the case of an equilateral triangular cross-section and sharing their findings with the rest of the class. Pupils make very good progress developing strategies for solving problems and investigations through planned exercises, persevering until a task is complete. Pupils' numerical skills are very good and are further reinforced through mental 'warm-up' sessions at the start of most lessons. Standards achieved in algebra are very good. In Year 9, all pupils were seen to be competent at constructing the graphs of linear functions, determining their gradient and intercept and completing the inverse, applying all the rules of algebra well. Scrutiny of pupils' exercise books and notebooks indicated some challenging aspects of shape, space and measurement involving transformation geometry. Neat and accurate diagrams supported pupils learning. The standard of achievement when handling data is very good. The lowest attaining pupils can present real information in the form of a frequency table, calculate a mean value, reinforcing their knowledge of number, illustrate the information in a variety of ways and interpret the outcome against an initial hypothesis. The highest attaining pupils can compare experimental with theoretical probability well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, achieving as well as their peers particularly with the help of learning support assistants attached to specific pupils.
53. In the work seen at Key Stage 4 the standards achieved by pupils preparing for the higher and intermediate tiers at GCSE are high. Knowledge and the application of number is very good with the highest attaining pupils using standard form, surds, fractional indices, directed number and estimating skills well. The strategic use of the calculator is an aide to pupils' learning. In Year 10,

pupils were observed investigating the terminal task 'one, two, three' and discovering the Fibonacci sequence. The standard of achievement in algebra for all pupils is very good. Pupils can factorise quadratic expressions with the highest attaining pupils able to solve quadratic functions using a variety of strategies. Pupils continue to make very good progress with shape, space and measurement. Pupils in Year 10 working on Euclidean geometry were able to calculate the angles of a cyclic quadrilateral together with tangents to the circle using the correct terminology and methods of solution. The progress made when handling data is very good with examples of discrete and continuous grouped data, cumulative frequency curves including the inter-quartile range and scatter diagrams, presented both clearly and accurately supporting learning. High attaining pupils in Year 11 were observed establishing a linear law based on experimental data involving an independent variable.

54. In the work seen at sixth form level, the standards achieved by students are above average overall with the highest attaining pupils making very good progress. Pupils in Year 13 were observed applying previously taught skills well, for example, working on differential equations, 'separating the variable'. In Year 12, pupils' knowledge of maxima and minima is good. However, progress is hindered by limited skills, knowledge and understanding of algebra when pupils' investigated the profit earned selling water tanks of fixed volume using the least amount of material. Similarly, when calculating the points of intersection of two curves and areas between the curves. From the scrutiny of individual pupils' work, progress made is very good in both pure mathematics and mechanics, appropriate to pupils' capability.
55. The school is committed to securing a higher standard of numeracy for pupils entering the school in response to the National Numeracy Strategy. The school development plan includes reference to preparing the way for a school numeracy policy in line with a County priority, during the next academic year. At present there has been no formal audit of numeracy being used across the curriculum and there are no standardised methods for solving numerical problems. Information on the National Numeracy Strategy has been collected and shared with members of the mathematics department to raise staff awareness. Aspects of the numeracy strategy have been included in mathematics teaching from Year 7 upwards through mental starters and the introduction of three part lessons, building on mental and aural strategies established in the feeder primary schools and through the sharing of learning objectives at the start of every lesson.
56. The quality of teaching and learning is overall good at both key stages including the sixth form. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is excellent and a strength of the department impacting positively on pupils progress. Teachers' planning is very good with learning objectives clearly communicated to pupils, providing a clear purpose at the start of lessons. Teachers' expectations are very high with very good use of open and closed questions that challenge pupils thinking, engaging and deepening their understanding. Pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is excellent. There is clear evidence of work prompting intellectual effort and an atmosphere of imaginative curiosity, with pupils working in groups, independently and at the whiteboard enhancing their personal development, confidence and learning. Good use is made of time by the teachers to promote good behaviour and effective learning although opportunity for a plenary session at the end of lessons is often omitted. There are clear expectations of high standards from the pupils and the focus is on work for the duration of lessons. Relationships between the pupils themselves and with the teacher are excellent. Pupils' attitude and response to mathematics are very good, leading to good progress being made. Teaching methods are very good with the strategic use of resources and imaginative teaching styles making learning easy, memorable and fun. Information and communication technology is used to support learning in a number of lessons. Homework is issued regularly to all pupils, however, opportunities for extending the gifted and talented pupils, particularly the highest attaining pupils are missed. Marking pupils' work is up to date but grades are not standardised across the department and valid diagnostic annotations in homework books to support learning are infrequent. Procedures for the assessment of pupils at the end of a unit of work are excellent. Pupils have a very good appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses through the performance profile but there is no analysis of the data to inform curriculum planning.

57. The leadership and management of the department is excellent. Standards at both key stages and at sixth form level have improved since the last report. The department works well together and there is a clear commitment to raise standards further in the department development plan. All the issues raised in the last report have been addressed with the exception of information and communication technology which is in the process of being introduced across the mathematics curriculum through a revised scheme of work. Further improvement could be achieved if the department Handbook's existing policies were revised, such as marking, which needs further clarification over procedures and practice. Additional policies such as literacy and special educational needs, should be established with National Curriculum levels of attainment included in the department profile. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning needs to be formalised through lesson observation, enabling the sharing of good practice, further analysis of collected data and through regular line management meetings that have set agendas and are minuted. Staffing, accommodation and resources that are available are satisfactory, however, the Key Stage 3 textbook is out of date and needs replacing and provision of a set of graphic calculators would aid pupils' conceptual development of the subject.

SCIENCE

58. Standards are high at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 because teachers have very good subject expertise and high expectations of pupils. Knowledge and understanding is high. Scientific enquiry is well above average by the end of Key Stage 3 and high by the end of Key Stage 4. Attainment has improved significantly since the last inspection in both key stages.
59. In the 2000 tests at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment was very high in the top five per cent of schools nationally by age 14 compared with the national average. The majority of pupils reached the higher levels 6 and 7. Boys performed better than girls. Results over four years have been well above the national average. When compared with similar schools, performance was below average. The number of pupils reaching the high level 6 was average, but the number reaching the higher level 7 was well below average.
60. High results were sustained throughout Key Stage 4 in comparison with all maintained schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A*-C in double award was almost twice the national average and those achieving expected grades A*-G was above average. High results have been maintained over four years. Boys and girls achieved high results compared with the national average although girls performed better than boys.
61. Standards at the end of the sixth form are above average. In the 2000 A level examinations some variation arose between subjects because a number of students did not meet expected requirements, particularly in biology. Results in biology were in line with national averages for the highest grades. In chemistry the number of students reaching the highest grades was above average; in physics results were above the national average and the number attaining the highest grades was well above average.
62. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with results reported in tests and examinations. Pupils have good subject knowledge imbued by very well qualified teachers and the interest and enthusiasm they bring to the subject. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form the ablest pupils are highly articulate about scientific principles and reach high standards of enquiry and investigation. In Key Stage 3 standards of knowledge and understanding are equally high. They make good observations, recording them accurately and clearly, but they require greater challenge in interpretation and analysis of findings. This aspect of work is improving as pupils engage in challenging activities in Years 7 and 8 to extend their capacity to think scientifically. Overall, scientific enquiry and investigation have improved since the last inspection.
63. Standards of literacy are good. Opportunities for research encourage good writing about social issues. Year 8 pupils write convincingly about the problem of acid rain. Year 9 write good leaflets about planets and Year 10 are persuasive about the benefits of good house insulation in conserving world energy supplies. All pupils need greater opportunity to present ideas and experimental

findings formally to the class. Some are reticent and do not develop good facility in reasoned argument, making it more difficult for them to be analytical and evaluative in writing. Time is allocated for younger pupils to engage in sustained discussion. As a result they refine their ideas as seen when Year 7 identify patterns by varying the voltage in electrical circuits.

64. Numeracy skills are high. Year 9 pupils are competent in calculating the loss of mass resulting from gas produced in a chemical reaction. In Year 11 they measure liquids accurately in conducting an investigation to find the effect of the concentration of fertiliser on the growth of a population of cress seeds. Scrutiny of work shows very good facility in calculating the change of mass during electrolysis. Standards in the use of information and communication technology are good and have improved since the last inspection. However all pupils need to reach consistently high standards, especially in drawing and interpreting graphs, by using information technology more frequently.
65. Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress throughout the school and students achieve well in the sixth form. Planning in Key Stage 3 does not always take sufficient account of the achievement of pupils in the primary school and this sometimes results in too much time being spent in reinforcing earlier knowledge, as in a lesson on magnets in Year 8. Individuals with special educational needs in all three key stages make good progress because teachers know them well and take particular care to meet their needs. The few individuals who speak English as an additional language are well integrated, making good progress.
66. Teaching and learning are very good. In Key Stage 3 teaching is good, improving to very good as the emphasis on investigation develops in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teachers have very good subject expertise that is respected by pupils. They use simple examples and very good analogies to explain complex scientific ideas: in the sixth form, students understand an abstract idea in chemistry because they imagine climbing the largest sand dune in Europe in order to appreciate the energy required for chemical change. As a result of challenging practical work, they work productively, are well organised and co-operate in teams, managing equipment and responding very well in meeting safety requirements. In the very best lessons, teachers use resources to present information very well, giving pupils a range of good visual materials. Year 11 became fully involved in a lesson on radioactivity because they appreciated the benefits and concerns raised on video. Teachers foster enthusiasm and hard work, further enriching pupils' positive attitudes and enjoyment of science. Pupils are serious about their work, enjoying good relationships with teachers and steadily increasing in maturity.
67. Assessment is good. Homework is set regularly and work marked carefully, but is less consistent in the quality of comments used to help pupils review their efforts and know how to improve. Assessment is very well used at the start of the sixth form course, setting students realistic targets from GCSE attainment. Those in Key Stage 4 have a good understanding of examination criteria, but younger pupils in Key stage 3 would benefit similar targets based on standards attained at the end of primary school, to give them earlier insights into the school's expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Progress is not assessed in the use of information and communication technology.
68. Leadership is good. A committed team works hard to fulfil school policies, evident in significant development of new schemes Key Stage 4 and the sixth form to reflect national changes. Teachers have good expertise in using information technology and schemes have been updated, but pupils require more access to further improve the frequency of use. In establishing more formalised systems for monitoring pupils' progress, the department is well placed to develop them further to show pupils their achievements over their time in school. Accommodation is of good quality, but sixth form specialist rooms are small for groups conducting practical chemistry experiments. Good risk assessments take place, but chemicals should not be stored permanently on open benches. The quality of work provided by technicians is very good. The department has made good improvements since the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

69. Pupils enter the school with very good spatial skills which they apply highly effectively to their studies in art. They are encouraged to develop individuality and expressiveness early in Key Stage 3 and teachers expect pupils to be able to apply their skills with a good degree of independence. Pupils' skills in an appropriate variety of media develop satisfactorily through years 7 and 8. Rigorous focus on drawing skills in year 9, combined with their abilities to experiment creatively lead to above average standards in work seen by the end of Key Stage 3. Some pupils in all years are well above average in both practical elements and in the expressive, creative aspects of their work. This was seen for example in a year 8 portraiture project and in year 7 still-life based work. Both projects start from good observational drawing, include development of key painting and drawing skills and the addition of imaginative backgrounds. Almost no pupil's work falls below national expectations at the end of year 9. These strengths underpin pupils' very good development in their GCSE years.
70. GCSE A*-C results in 2000 were well above national averages and higher than average for selective schools. However the proportions of A* and A grades were below those of similar schools and have shown a downward trend in recent years Pupils apply their experience of independent learning to reflect good individual responses, honing and refining skills well. The department offers two specialist examinations, painting and drawing or three-dimensional studies. In each discipline, standards of work seen are well above average. Year 10 work shows very high standards indeed, particularly in the very large drawing and painting class. Pupils' application of their high abilities to undertake research and investigations leads in many examples seen to excellent theoretical and analytical work to support their practical attainment. In discussion about projects pupils are articulate, using gallery visits, books and Internet sources intelligently and reflect what they learn in their visual work. Pupils of all abilities progress well, including the few with special educational or EAL needs. Achievement is very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where most students' work demonstrates a very high level of individuality and flair. The proportion attaining higher grades at A level has been very high of late compared with selective schools and has improved since the last inspection.
71. Teaching is good overall. It is good at Key Stage 3 and is very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teachers' most effective methods are in the individual support they give to pupils as they move around classes. Where classes are small this works well. With classes of 32, however, and this is the sole teaching strategy, the 50 minute lesson is too short to allow pupils to learn enough from their teachers. Pupils do, though, develop the good level of independence described above, and learn to express their individuality. Good teaching provides individual pupils with a very high level of challenge, requiring them to apply a combination of arts skills to their high intellectual understanding of the links between theory and practice. At Key Stage 3 pupils have no sketchbooks and no formal homework. Sketchbooks were developing well at the time of the last report but now pupils have no single mechanism to record their progress in either practical or research aspects of the subject. Folders of loose work kept in the department give pupils access to their work only in lesson time, so they do not develop a good idea of their progress in the subject. Although the department has rightly acquired higher status in the school through its good examination record, these omissions at Key Stage 3 undermine teachers' attempts to establish the rigour of the subject in pupils' eyes earlier in the school.
72. Aspects of the department's work have improved since the last inspection. Pupils' written expression of ideas for example is much better, and is now often very good at Key Stage 4 and post-16. The variety of media they use is much wider and insufficient resources no longer constrain work in most lessons. A level grades have improved. Key weaknesses outside the department's own control have not improved enough. Unhelpfully large classes still exist in both Key Stages. The department has no computers at all - highly unusual for a school of this type. Although pupils can go to ICT suites, the development of most pupils' understanding of information and communications technology as a creative tool has not occurred, with very little use of computers other than occasional word-processing or research seen in pupils' work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

73. Standards overall in design and technology are broadly average at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form but with significant areas of weakness. Standards are well above average at Key Stage 4. Limited improvement has taken place since the last inspection. At the end of Key Stage 3 in the 2000 unmoderated teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment, the percentage of pupils reaching the national average is reported to be well above expectation. Observed standards during the inspection suggest that the results were optimistic. The majority of pupils are however performing at least in line with national expectations for their age.
74. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 2000 GCSE results were well above national averages for those pupils obtaining grades A*-C, but below those of selective schools. Boys' results compare unfavourably with the achievement of girls when measured against respective national averages and against other subjects at the school, particularly for higher attaining pupils. In the sixth form, results have remained consistently lower than those for selective schools over recent years.
75. The home economics subjects of food and textiles achieve above average standards overall; standards in resistant materials are below average throughout the school. At Key Stage 4 however, standards still compare favourably with those achieved by all schools. Standards in graphics are average but are improving.
76. From the work seen at Key Stage 3, pupils quickly learn how to use basic tools and equipment safely and reasonably accurately. They establish appropriate technical drawing protocols and build a good understanding of the properties of food. In textiles they begin to gain an aesthetic awareness of the use of fabrics in a narrow range of projects. Pupils' understanding of the properties, and feeling for the use and selection of materials for projects generally remains limited and they fail to make sufficient progress in the way they integrate designing and making to produce innovative products in response to human needs. The organisation of curriculum time in the curriculum carousel at Key Stage 3 restricts the progress and standards pupils are likely to achieve. Teachers do not get to know pupils sufficiently well and continuity in the development of pupils' capability in the subject is inhibited. The progress made by higher attaining pupils is less than for other groups as they show little creative or analytical thinking in their work. At Key Stage 4, motivated pupils have higher expectations and produce creative products in textiles. All pupils integrate their knowledge and skill well when working with food. In resistant materials and graphics, standards are restricted by their prior attainment and pupils continue to work in a narrowly focused way without full consideration being given to client needs. Their approach lacks reflection and evaluation but girls take much more care with their work than boys. Skills continue to develop to a satisfactory standard but the relationship between need and solution continues to be underdeveloped. In the sixth form, a minority of students work in contexts that stretch their ability. This was exemplified by a student who re-designed a local store to attract custom at Christmas; attention was paid to detail, feedback from the store was taken into account and he worked imaginatively to generate an acceptable solution to the identified problem.
77. Standards of pupil literacy are high in the written work but they have insufficient opportunity to exploit their oral literacy to discuss design issues and develop depth in their understanding of the design process. Good standards of numeracy are witnessed when Key Stage 4 and sixth form pupils use calculations, measure and numerically model design solutions to problems. Good standards of presentation in folder work are achieved using computers to desk-top-publish reports of investigations and research. Standards achieved in graphics and the use computers for digital control are low, reflecting the lack of opportunity and experience by all pupils.
78. Teaching overall is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and is good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. It is better at Key Stages 4 and in the sixth form as a result of the teachers' increased knowledge of their pupils. Public examination criteria ensure that pupils have a better understanding of learning targets and additionally show a greater urgency in their work to achieve well at these stages. Single 50 minute lessons and insufficient technician time reduce the effectiveness of teaching at Key Stage 4 as lessons do not give sufficient time to undertake practical work and develop the underpinning theory together.

79. In an example of very good teaching, Year 7 pupils worked in a well chosen, meaningful context of designing and making mechanical toys. Card modelling was used prior to the lesson to test out ideas and evaluate design approaches. The teacher used a balance of closed and open questioning which enabled all pupils to develop design and manufacturing skills in an integrated way working with wood. The approach also enabled higher attaining pupils to be creative and take risks through designing more complex mechanisms. Pupils were trusted to conduct themselves in a safe responsible way and managed through the adoption of a quiet but challenging manner which motivated pupils and enabled them to develop higher expectations of their own performance. Good sustained pace and challenge usually occur in food lessons ensuring that pupils remain interested. In sixth form teaching, the best teaching occurs when students are encouraged and supported when working with external agencies such as the design of promotional material for a local football club. When the teaching is satisfactory, the teacher directs information at the class without involving and challenging the pupils through appropriate questioning as with a Year 12 Food lesson. The students learn due to their concentration and ability to assimilate facts and knowledge but fail to appreciate the full significance or relevance of the knowledge which limits their ability to apply it. This restricts progress particularly for the higher attaining students who do not achieve their potential. Often, and particularly in courses where assessment criteria are less clear at Key Stage 3, pupils are unsure about how to raise their standards through improving the quality of their learning.
80. The departmental ethos shows a clear concern for pupils and their learning and teachers are professional in the way they plan courses and lessons. They trust pupils who in turn show their appreciation through the enjoyment most gain from their work in lessons. Good provision is made at Key Stage 4 in the range of courses offered. There is a lack of a common vision about the direction of the department overall. The current philosophy is more concerned with the development of traditional crafts than with providing a modern integrated technological experience for able pupils. Teachers are unused to observing each others lessons and sharing best practice in a way that could improve teaching and raise standards. The curriculum is unbalanced by the minimal inclusion of electronics, systems, control; the lack of effective integration of information and communication technologies and the inclusion of ceramics in the Key Stage 3 curriculum carousel. This distorts the pupils understanding of the nature of the subject and insufficiently illustrates the links to commercial and industrial contexts. Accommodation is spacious and comfortable and there are some very good examples of pupils' work on display, but there is a lack of visual stimuli in the form of 2-D and 3-D materials that could challenge pupils' self-expectations of performance, their understanding of the subject and application of imagination. The lack of effective cleaning in the food room and workshop where medium density fibreboard dust has been accumulating are potentially hazardous to health.
81. The Department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Limited improvements have occurred in standards at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Curriculum provision has improved at Key Stage 3 but is still inadequate through the type of curriculum model employed. Accommodation, resources and materials have improved considerably and a part time technician has been appointed although the hours allocated are insufficient.

GEOGRAPHY

82. This is a very effective subject. Standards of work throughout are exceptionally high. Pupils' attainment at age 14 is very high, and direct observation of pupils' work supports the school's teacher assessments. Standards attained by the vast majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are significantly above those expected nationally.
83. GCSE results are significantly above average when compared to all schools, and are just above those attained by all selective schools. Standards at age 16 have been consistently high for the last four years. Standards of work seen in year 11 lessons suggest that this very high attainment is continuing. The standard achieved by all pupils in work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 is also high.

84. Standards attained by students in the sixth form are significantly above the average for all schools. When compared to other selective schools, attainment at GCE A Level is above average and has been at this high level for the last four years. Work seen in the current year 13 shows that these exceptionally high standards are being maintained.
85. All pupils achieve well, both in comparison with pupils in similar schools and in relation to their previous knowledge of the subject. As a result of skilful teaching, pupils achieve well throughout all key stages, and gains in subject knowledge and understanding is significant. By age 14, most have a very good knowledge and understanding of geographic processes and patterns and of environmental themes. For instance in an excellent year 7 lesson, pupils were already using appropriate geographic terms and were easily able to evaluate complicated information on the environmental impact of a new rail route, and present their findings to the class. In year 11 and the sixth form the vast majority of pupils and students are confidently able to interpret geographic information, make reasoned judgements and offer explanations for patterns. This was well shown in a very good year 13 lesson on global warming, where students were searching for and weighing the evidence from information in secondary sources.
86. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils make equally good progress as a result of a skilful match of classroom tasks to the needs of individual students. This is well shown in an excellent year 8 lesson on natural hazards where excellent progress was made as a result of the teachers skilful use of video, pair work and "brain storming" to illustrate and extend pupils understanding of the nature and classification of these hazards.
87. In nearly all lessons, excellent relationships and behaviour, fostered by enthusiastic and stimulating teaching, contribute strongly to the positive attitude to learning. The vast majority of students respond well. They are eager, enthusiastic learners who readily engage in productive group and pair work, helping each other to search for information and solve problems. However, a small minority of students, especially in year 9, have a low listening span and lose interest if teacher exposition is over long. They are, on occasions, too ready to spend time on low level tasks and need prompting to move onto more challenging activities such as interpreting information and offering explanations. This was well illustrated in a year 9 lesson on weather, where several pupils spent too long on drawing and colouring their graphs.
88. Teaching overall is very good. All teaching is satisfactory or better and just over half of all lessons are very good or excellent. Teaching is most effective at Key Stage 3. In the overwhelming majority of lessons the excellent subject knowledge of teachers is skilfully transmitted to pupils through lively teacher exposition. It is invariably clear, stimulating and authoritative, drawing on many topical examples to illustrate and bring to life geographic themes. In a small minority of lessons, however, progress is slowed by over long teacher talk, which results in pupils losing interest and becoming passive. Very good use is made of audio visual aids such as video and photographs to reinforce pupil understanding. An example was a Year 13 lesson on rising sea level where photographs were very well used to stimulate students to explore the causes and consequences of these sea level changes.
89. Learning is accelerated in nearly all lessons by the very skilful management of pupils through high expectations of behaviour. Teachers create a relaxed yet productive atmosphere in classes which is highly conducive to learning. Teachers expect much of pupils as in a year 11 lesson on marine pollution where the study of processes is more common at A Level. Teachers encourage pupils to persevere when faced with difficulty and, as a result, they readily engage in classroom activities, working with diligence and enthusiasm. Higher attaining students in particular are attaining a deep understanding of complex geographic issues, such as the environmental conflict arising from urban development.
90. Questioning is often used very effectively to challenge and develop pupils' understanding. The department skilfully uses a wide range of learning activities which are challenging, interesting and usually very well matched to the needs of individual students. These are having a positive impact on the attainment, particularly that of higher attaining pupils. Group work, role-play and simulations are very well used in enabling pupils to challenge and support each other in their learning. This was well

demonstrated in the year 7 lesson on route planning where pupils researched a topic and then shared their finding with the class.

91. In most lessons, very good levels of concentration and interest are well fostered by a brisk and purposeful pace. Time is used to the full with teachers fully engaging pupils in productive and interesting tasks. These are usually well matched to pupils' prior attainment, resulting in them maintaining interest and becoming active learners. In a minority of lessons, however, teachers tend to over direct pupils learning with the result that they do not readily take responsibility for their own learning, develop initiative and learn from their mistakes.
92. Learning in nearly all lessons is accelerated by the teachers' careful planning, which design activities that encourage pupils to "find out" rather than being "told". The confidence of teachers not to over direct pupils in these lessons is rewarded by their sense of achievement at their discovery of knowledge.
93. Homework effectively supports pupils' interest and understanding of their work. Many tasks are set which encourage the development of research skills, particularly the use of computers to search for and present information. Nearly all pupils are keen to succeed and most understand how well they are achieving. Pupils work is regularly and accurately marked but there are too few helpful and supportive comments which encourage them to learn from their mistakes and move on.
94. The subject is well led and managed by an efficient and effective head of department working closely with a team of enthusiastic geographers. There is a very good team ethos and a genuine shared commitment to high standards. The department identifies clear, quantified targets for improvements and devises strategies to reach them. The shared vision of the department fully matches that of the school. The geography staff complement each other in terms of their range of experience, and the head of department is beginning to have a strong impact on creating a culture of self evaluation in the subject. Leadership would be even further enhanced through a more systematic approach to monitoring the work of the department through lesson observation, sampling of pupils work and the use of performance data, which allows the department to compare its' achievements with those of similar schools. Curriculum planning does not make explicit how the learning of different groups of pupils are to be extended or supported.
95. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching further improved. Good use is now being made of field work and computers to extend and enhance pupils learning.

HISTORY

96. The school's assessments show that attainment in history at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above and in line with that of similar selective schools. During the inspection standards observed indicate the same pattern of attainment. At GCSE pupils are meeting course requirements and results are well above the national expectations. The overall pass rate and percentage of candidates awarded the higher grades, A* and A in 2000 was similar to other selective schools; although the numbers entered are too low for a statistically valid comparison. Standards are well above the national average and are in line with similar selective schools; this was reflected in the work observed during the inspection. Advanced level results are above the national average and students are able reach and even surpass their predicted grades. However again the number of students entered is low. The present sixth form students show that they have responded to the advanced level work well and standards observed during the inspection compare favourably with those seen in similar schools. The trend both in recent years and since the last inspection has been upward in that standards have improved at the end of Key Stage 3 and in examinations.
97. During the inspection the standards of work seen at the end of Key Stage 3 was judged to be well above average. In lessons pupils showed that they can use a variety of extracts to find information about the past and to make judgements about cause and effect and the motivation of individuals. By the end of the key stage they are able to understand the causes and results of the major developments of this century including the impact of world war. Study of life in the trenches during

the Great War enables pupils to empathise with the experience of people in the past because they have the opportunity to visit the battlefield sites and the town of Ypres. Displays of posters show that they understand how propaganda was used to persuade people to support the war effort. Written work in all year groups is usually well-presented and pupils' work includes examples of a wide variety of tasks. Pupils of the highest potential attainment are able to use complex information and detailed sources to reach mature judgements. Most pupils have a good knowledge of the topics that they have studied. Pupils are particularly good at remembering detail and evaluating primary and secondary sources of evidence. Individual pupils with special educational needs show high levels of understanding and respond well in class.

98. Work seen at Key Stage 4 shows well above average standards with pupils showing that they have both a detailed knowledge of the topics that they are studying and the high level of skills in essay and document work which will help them to succeed. Pupils answer and ask questions with confidence and in doing so they all show a secure level of knowledge and understanding. They are able to base their ideas and judgements on a careful study of extracts and source material and to show that they understand how evidence can be misleading or biased. The most able pupils respond very well to the detail and complexity of the issues surrounding the struggle to extend the franchise to women. They understand that some influential people were opposed to the granting of legal status to women and are able to use case studies such as the life of Caroline Norton to gain a clear understanding of the vulnerable position of women in the early Victorian period. All pupils have a clear understanding of the different levels of response to GCSE questions and of how to produce the quality of course work required.
99. During the inspection the standard of work in the sixth form was well above average. Students in Year 12 use a variety of sources to establish a clear understanding of two very different periods of history. They are able to evaluate the factors affecting the establishment of the Tudor dynasty in England and those contributing to the problems of the last years of the reign of Louise XIV in France. Students in year thirteen show confidence in their own judgement in class discussions and they are able to appreciate the complexity of factors affecting political change in Britain in the seventeenth century. They appreciate the obstacles faced by Cromwell in establishing a political settlement even if they inevitably find some of his political and religious attitudes difficult to comprehend.
100. The management of learning in history is good because the quality of the teaching is good and because of the positive attitudes of the great majority of pupils. Pupils learn well because they are active participants rather than passive listeners. The planning for the subject ensures that both skills and areas of knowledge are built up very well as pupils' progress through the school. Progress is good in all year groups and for those pupils with special educational needs. Younger pupils develop research skills and learn how to evaluate evidence as they study the events of 1066. Later they benefit from the opportunity to participate in role play which help them understand Tudor society or the due process of law which led to the execution of Guy Fawkes. By the end of Year 9 the majority have a secure grasp of all aspects of all aspects of the study of history and the ability to make mature and reasoned judgements about cause and effect and the impact of change. Learning is very effective in examination classes. Those who choose to take the subject at GCSE or Advanced level acquire both the depth of knowledge and the skills required to meet the examination requirements. All those who study history have the opportunity to go on visits to historic sites, museums and student conferences and this greatly enhances their learning. The depth and breadth of the topics covered ensures that the subject makes a good contribution the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and to their awareness of citizenship.
101. The teaching of history is good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and it is very good in the sixth form. In the lessons observed the quality of teaching was always sound and the majority of lessons were good or very good. Teachers are using a variety of approaches to teaching and learning. They are setting a variety of tasks which make a valuable contribution to literacy skills, particularly through extended writing. The quality of displays is very high, teachers use display as part of the learning process and to show that they value the work of their pupils. The department makes good use of opportunities for the development of skills in the use of computers; particularly for research. In some Key Stage 3 classes, because of the limited time available, the pace of the lessons is such

that there is too little time for pupils to reflect on what they have learned. Drama and role play are used very effectively to increase the level of understanding of pupils. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject and they manage learning well. In the most effective lessons the variety of resources and classroom activities are very good and the teaching provides real challenges for even the very highest attainers. Assessment procedures are good, as is the quality of questioning in class which is used to review earlier work and assess and extend pupils' understanding. In examination classes the very careful monitoring of work makes a considerable contribution to learning. Homework always links well with classwork and thus helps pupils progress well.

102. The management of the subject is good. There is a clear focus on review and development and the talents and skills of teachers are used very effectively. Careful planning and monitoring ensures pupils learn in a planned way. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Resources, standards and teaching have improved and new courses and assessment procedures introduced. The department provides a very rich experience in history for all pupils and more are now choosing to study the subject at GCSE and Advanced level.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

103. Standards overall are broadly average throughout the school although they are below average for approximately one third of the pupils at Key Stage 4 for whom the statutory curriculum requirement is not met and who are not guaranteed the appropriate support that ensures their progress. This shows an improvement since the last inspection. Standards across the school are higher in text based communication, data processing and management and modelling than in control and graphics creation and manipulation where all pupils have insufficient experience.
104. At Key Stage 3, unmoderated teacher assessments indicate that pupil's attainment has been gradually improving over recent years and that in 2000, they achieved well in excess of national expectations for their age. Observed standards in the inspection suggests that this was slightly optimistic. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE results shows improvement over recent years. Performance at A*-C level is well above the national average and is above that for selective schools, although here it is much lower for those attaining the highest grades. Standards in the sixth form do not improve overall from those at the end of Key Stage 4 largely as a result of the absence of structured courses or teaching. The provision is currently under review by the school.
105. At Key Stage 3, standards of work seen are above average. Pupils show confidence when using the computer keyboard and achieve good standards when using a professional word processor or a desktop publishing programme. Most pupils are able to use spreadsheets effectively to arrange and manipulate data, then display the results using a range of charts and graphs. By Year 8, all pupils are able to set up and effectively use a relational database to organise, search and sort data. Higher attaining pupils have limited opportunity to access higher National Curriculum levels through evaluating the fitness for purpose of their approach to solving problems and using the computer desktop as a creative tool to experiment with novel methods and approaches. All pupils gain a limited understanding of the principles of computer control through the generation of program sequences to operate a screen turtle but do not apply their skills to the control of external devices. Good standards of literacy are achieved at this key stage as pupils make careful decisions about their use of language in publicity leaflets they produce and good standards of numeracy are achieved through the way formulae are created, calculations developed and the results of data processing displayed when they use spreadsheets. In examination courses at Key Stage 4, standards are high. pupils who take a GCSE course deepen their knowledge and skills in the areas of the subject developed during Key Stage 3. They are also able to discuss some of the social and ethical implications of the use of technology. Higher attaining pupils fail to apply the necessary analytical rigour to the identification and solution of relevant problems of which they are capable. They do understand however how to design a web page and use html codes to achieve this purpose. In the best designs, a good sense of audience is displayed by the authors. However pupils who do not follow a GCSE course at Key Stage 4 get an inconsistent and patchy experience of ICT and do not have the opportunity to develop their skills in a systematic way. Standards are often reliant on pupils' opportunities to use ICT at home.

106. The geography, history and English departments use information and communication technology in effective and planned ways throughout the key stages. In a Year 10 history lesson, pupils researched and analysed data in discriminating ways using the public record website on the Internet to investigate the question of whether a suffragette, Emily Davidson, died as a result of a protest gone wrong, or through suicide. These departments are also developing the skills of contributing to the assessment of pupils' ICT capability. The mathematics department is using ICT increasingly effectively for numerical investigation and modelling activity using eg. omnigraph software. The science department incorporates the use of ICT at all key stages for sensing and data-logging in addition to a range of subject specific software for assisting learning in the subject. Departments such as music, modern foreign languages and design and technology take opportunities to incorporate ICT into pupils' experiences where possible. The majority of work undertaken by pupils in departments is largely word processing or desktop publishing which contributes minimally to ICT capability. Many pupils are increasingly using CD ROMs and the Internet to aid their research in subject areas. Teachers' skill levels, confidence and access to equipment are major inhibiting factors in the commitment of some. There has been however some improvement since the last inspection at which subject involvement was a key issue. The school recognises that there is still some way to go before a satisfactory involvement of subjects is achieved.
107. The quality of the teaching in the ICT courses at both key stages is good overall. Teachers have sufficient knowledge and skill to ensure that pupils' learning is appropriately directed and they give very good support in lessons to ensure that pupils become confident and make rapid progress in the acquisition of skills. Boys and most girls are enthusiastic about their work but a few lower attaining girls at Key Stage 3 lack confidence when using a computer keyboard. Individual support is better at Key Stage 4 when the teachers know more about the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils. Planning is effective and focused on learning needs. Good teaching resources are produced which ensures that all have a structure to their learning which ensures that best use is made of the limited time available for Key Stage 3 pupils. They are eager and self-disciplined when using computers and show pride in their achievements. Despite the existence of differentiated resources for higher attaining pupils, the teaching styles used do not enable these pupils to become autonomous learners, using the computer desktop creatively and developing the skills to self-select the computer to apply their skills to a range of problems. At Key Stage 4 in the GCSE courses, teachers set high expectations and use their good levels of expertise to set suitable tasks. Lower attaining pupils achieve at least in line with their ability as pupils help each other, reflecting the good quality relationships that exist between them.
108. Pupils gain insufficient experience of control technology and the creation and manipulation of graphics. The art and design, and design and technology departments currently make limited provision for this. Up to now, the number of modern computers in the school has been below the National average and has placed limitations on cross curricular usage by subjects. The position is improving, but even after the installation of a planned new network, certain areas of the school will remain inadequately resourced. A satisfactory staff training programme is in place supported by the New Opportunities Funding Initiative and is contributing to improved learning for pupils. The school recognises that substantial unfulfilled needs remain. A clear and appropriate vision for the development of ICT is held by the School but continued investment needs to be carefully planned and committed.
109. Since the last inspection, satisfactory improvement has taken place. Access to computers has improved for pupils and teachers in subject areas, their expertise has been strengthened but there has been a deterioration in the number of computers available for supporting pupils' learning. The assessment and recording of pupil's progress and achievement has improved considerably and technical support is now available through the services of a Network Manager. The Department now needs to concentrate on providing progressive learning opportunities for those pupils at Key Stage 4 for whom it is currently lacking and in the sixth form. Additionally, standards of higher attaining pupils need to be raised through creating opportunities for them to use the computer as a creative and analytical tool and through promoting autonomous learning. The ICT curriculum needs to be

further embedded in subjects across the curriculum. Access to staff training and appropriate resources needs to be broadened to meet the identified needs.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

110. Pupils study French or German as their first modern language in roughly equal numbers. At the age of 14, standards in both languages are well above the national average. In the National Curriculum Key Stage 3 assessments almost all pupils reach level 4, the standard expected of their age, and over two-thirds reach level 5. However, very few progress beyond this by the end of Year 9.
111. Current standards in work seen in Year 9 are well above average. Most pupils are used to hearing the language spoken throughout their lessons and have a very good knowledge and understanding of vocabulary and grammar. They can identify detail and make deductions in what they hear and read. They know and can use present and past tenses and are generally secure in applying rules, for example of German word order and inflexions and French reflexive verbs. They use the present and past tenses accurately, and from memory, in letters and paragraphs on their family, school day and daily routine. Standards achieved by some of the more gifted pupils, however, are disappointing. These pupils know the theory, but are unadventurous. Overall, pupils' speaking and writing skills do not develop enough over the key stage. The scheme of work, based on the current text book, does not encourage them to extend or enrich their writing enough. They enjoy role-play and some can improvise without relying on script, but few speak either at length or spontaneously. When pupils start their other language, in Year 8, they make rapid early progress, most reaching level 3 by their second term, and sustain this rate into Year 9. By the middle of the year most have reached the standard of their first language.
112. At the age of 16, the situation in French is similar to that at age 14, but better in German. In both languages, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C in the GCSE is very high compared with all maintained schools, and in German is consistently above that for selective schools. At grades A*-A, results have continued to improve in German, but they are not good in French. In both 1999 and 2000, the proportion of A*-A grades in French was well below that for selective schools. Contrary to the national picture, there is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls, and in fact boys perform well in French in relation to their other subjects. The significant dip in French results at A*-A in 1999 was due to incorrect decisions over the level of examination for which some pupils were entered, which in effect debarred them from attaining the highest levels.
113. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above average in terms of the numbers of pupils predicted, and on course, for grade C and above at GCSE. As at Key Stage 3, their comprehension skills are strong because their vocabulary is good and they can make informed inferences from tape and text. Most pupils succeed in Higher Tier papers because they work hard and can remember the appropriate phrase or structure and apply them in the right context. Many pupils write fluently and accurately from memory, and are realistically targeted for grades A*-B. Too many, however, are not secure enough in writing or speaking to be sure of crossing the C/D boundary, especially in French. Some pronunciation is still unpolished and occasionally impedes meaning. Pupils who continue to study their second language do not progress at the same rate as the equivalent pupils in Year 9 who have started their second language a year earlier.
114. Underachievement in French has been caused mainly by frequent changes of staff which have interrupted learning, and unsatisfactory curriculum arrangements when these pupils were in Key Stage 3. Delaying the introduction of the second language until Year 9 not only left them with insufficient time to achieve as they should at GCSE, but also made it impossible for the school to group pupils in Year 10 according to attainment and potential because their experience was so varied. In a few cases, attitudes have been affected. Pupils behave perfectly well, but some have little ambition. Some boys do not keep full and legible grammar notes which would provide a reliable support for their revision and some girls are too reticent.
115. Results at GCE Advanced Level are very good in both languages, with most students achieving grades A-B. In French, for example, all but two of the 18 students entered in 1999 and 2000 were awarded top grades. Current standards in the sixth form are above average for AS and AL

expectations, and students achieve well. In Year 12, they analyse searching texts and paraphrase competently to explain points of view and present arguments. They are adept in role play, seeking and giving information at the airport or as business representatives at an international fair. The standard of the best students is very high in both speech and writing. By Year 13 they examine moral issues such as cloning and the patenting of genomes, and present a personal viewpoint in class discussion. Most students try to communicate only through the foreign language. In their writing a few students struggle to express complex ideas in suitably precise grammatical structure and form.

116. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, because they share the work ethic of most other pupils. Teachers understand pupils' needs and help them with appropriate individual seating arrangements and personal support where possible.
117. Teaching is good overall, and very good in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. There are common strengths. Teachers are accomplished dual linguists who enable pupils to acquire very good knowledge and understanding of vocabulary and phrase and, at their best, use their expertise both to challenge and provide appropriate support at all stages of learning. Learning is very well organised and managed, as in the carousel of group learning in Year 11 involving the foreign language assistants, and behaviour is managed very well. As a result, pupils know what is expected, listen attentively to each other, work well, and concentrate. Where occasionally this is not the case, role play is allowed to become a little unfocused. The best teaching is very well planned, takes account of pupils' prior learning and injects a lively pace into activities which require pupils to use the language in games and authentic situations. These are sometimes stimulated by the use of props such as telephones or a mock suitcase containing holiday items. For example, in a Year 10 second language French class pupils practised paired numbers following some previous uncertainty, and the teacher arranged with the French assistant to call the pupils on their mobile phones in order to reinforce these numbers in a conversation. The overhead projector and video are used well as stimuli, despite the very poor blackout facility, as in a Year 9 German lesson on lost property items practising the accusative case. Listening stations and ICT are used effectively for consolidation, as in Year 11 French where pupils' uncertainty over the formation of the perfect tense was improved when they used a computer program to practise identifying the correct form and correcting their efforts.
118. Where there are occasional weaknesses the teacher does not think through all the possible outcomes of a planned activity, so that either the pupils are allowed to give an incorrect response or the objectives are not fully realised. Sometimes, too, pupils are required to practise too many new items at once in their role play. Marking is inconsistent, and usually does not give enough guidance. Some allows slipshod presentation of work in Years 9 and 10.
119. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Provision for independent reading, the application of ICT and second language arrangements in Key Stage 3 have all improved. The department is well staffed, and benefits from the support of two foreign language assistants. Some action in response to the previous report has been slow to take effect, but the department has become increasingly reflective and analytical in its planning for improvement, and is now using data to evaluate its performance. The development plan has identified relevant targets which the department has the capacity to achieve. Full advantage should be taken of the new opportunity to set in Year 10, and of the undoubtedly improving standards in Years 7 and 8.
120. The department should ensure through rigorous monitoring and sharing of practice that all teaching and learning is consistently up to the high standards of the best. All pupils should be expected to memorise, reproduce and extend what they learn to say, and spontaneous use encouraged and rewarded. There needs to be a clearer, more frequent link between National Curriculum levels, and routine marking and assessment. On the one hand, pupils should know what to do to improve, and on the other, teachers need more reliable data on which to base their lesson planning.

MUSIC

121. The standards reached by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form are above average in terms of work seen during the inspection, above national standards overall and in line with those found in similar schools. The standards seen in lessons and folders is not reflected in recent GCSE and A level results, where a lack of higher grades depresses the average scores.
122. In Key Stage 3 the pupils' composing is imaginative and well structured. They use keyboards and classroom percussion instruments skilfully to produce a range of expressive effects. They understand technical terms such as 'chromatic' and 'ostinato' and use them as a matter of course in their discussions. Staff notation is well known and understood by a majority of pupils; many use it to notate their own pieces. In Key Stage 4 pupils can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of musical styles and are articulate when appraising their compositions. Their pieces are of good quality overall and some are outstanding. One drumming piece is heavily influenced by African music; it is well structured and performed with skill. A level pupils have a thorough understanding of orchestral scores and good analytical skills. They know and understand harmony and are able to describe some of the stylistic characteristics of different composers. Ideas are expressed clearly and with confidence. The aural skills of some pupils are underdeveloped.
123. In both key stages and in the sixth form the teaching is good overall with some very good lessons. In Key Stage 3 the teachers plan and organise the work well. Because they are carefully set in the context of the unit of work pupils can see the relevance of individual lessons to the whole. Clear, lively introductions give rise to interest and enthusiasm; pupils understand what they have to do and focus on their work quickly. Well targeted advice supports them and helps them to achieve well. Where the teaching and learning are very good skilled questioning encourages thoughtful and creative responses. The content of some lessons inspires work of a particularly high quality; in a composing session on 'The Beginning of Time' pupils use keyboards and percussion to produce imaginative effects. In Key Stage 4 clear targets are set which relate directly to course requirements. The abilities and progress of each pupil are well known and the teachers' own musical skills are used effectively, particularly in practical sessions. In very good lessons care is taken to ensure that pupils have a good grasp of fundamental skills and concepts. In one lesson all pupils develop a good understanding of style by making up their own 'recitatives' in small groups.
124. Good subject knowledge underpins the A level teaching. Explanations of key concepts are admirably clear and support careful, methodical learning. In a very good lesson on 'The Madrigal' the use of a range of techniques, including sight-singing, listening and score-reading, gives pupils a comprehensive idea of the style. Sometimes in Year 12 the approach is a little too analytical and pupils lose concentration. On occasion pupils are given insufficient opportunity to contribute orally.
125. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in Key Stage 3 and excellent in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Pupils come to lessons ready and willing to learn. They are well equipped and organised. Apart from some occasional chattering in Key Stage 3 lessons pupils listen carefully and are keen to please. They are polite and respectful towards their teachers and welcoming to visitors. These pupils value their education.
126. The music curriculum contains a good balance of practical and other activities, although there is not enough singing in class. Units of work draw on music from a range of cultures and traditions. Planning is very good; the scheme of work, units and lesson plans are cohesive and assessment thorough. There is full compliance with the National Curriculum, although some terminology should be adjusted to take account of the latest revisions. There has been some progress in the use of ICT since the last inspection but much remains to be done; more computers and training are needed.
127. The individual instrumental tuition is broad and of good quality. This provision makes an important contribution to musical life of the school. The benefits to pupils are to be heard throughout the department – in practical class lessons, ensembles and school productions. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is well attended and ensembles are of good quality. Concerts are given regularly and a recent production of 'Oliver' was widely praised. The department has fruitful links with Fougères and plans to begin exchanges with Cologne. Professional musicians from the Kent Sinfonia recently worked alongside pupils in a successful project.

128. The department is well managed and was successfully steered through the difficulties caused by fire damage. The new accommodation is of a very high quality. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

129. Standards in lessons in Years 7 to 9 are above the national and are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. By age 14, the majority reach good levels for their age. In the course that all pupils take in Years 10 and 11, standards are satisfactory in terms of age-related national expectations but are not as high as at the time of the last inspection. A minority performs below expectations for their age. This is as a result of the limited time allocation for the course that all pupils take in Years 10 and 11. The good standards of attainment of those pupils taking the GCSE physical education course is having a positive impact on overall standards in Years 10 and 11. There are no significant differences between the standards of boys and girls.

130. By age 14, achievement in games is good. In badminton, boys use a range of shots in doubles play and are developing their tactical awareness well. In netball, girls have secure all-round skills and techniques and have developed secure tactical awareness in aspects of set play. By age 16, achievement is only satisfactory because of limited time allocation. Boys' basic basketball skills and techniques are secure and they are developing their awareness of defensive positional play and fast break techniques. The effectiveness of shooting skills of many remains an area for improvement. In gymnastics, girls are developing their individual skills and competencies in vaulting appropriately and in their trampoline lessons, are developing the complexity of their sequence work well in relation to their capabilities.

131. Across all years, pupils have a secure understanding of the principles and procedures of warm-up and, when given the opportunity to do so, lead aspects of this very well and know the muscles groups being stretched. Although no pupils identified as having special educational needs were observed with additional help, they are well supported, integrated and make good progress. The challenge offered in lessons and extra-curricular activities also enables the more physically capable pupils to make good progress.

132. Since the last inspection, GCSE physical education has become a well-established and popular course with pupils. For two years it became a compulsory course in years 10 and 11 with the majority following the full course and many the half course. Comparisons of results in 1999 and 2000 with similar schools in Kent and all maintained schools are therefore not realistic. However, in 1998, when the course was optional the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grade passes at 86 per cent was high compared to all maintained schools. Predicted grades for 2001 are similarly high. In their practical lessons, Year 10 pupils are making very good progress in, for example, developing their all-round individual and teamwork skills in indoor hockey. A scrutiny of their theory folders indicates Year 11 pupils have developed a good understanding of the syllabus requirements, in for example, anatomy and physiology. In their practical lessons, pupils' competencies in fielding techniques for both softball and rounders are good.

133. GCE Advanced physical education has also been introduced since the last inspection and, since 1998, the pass rate has been consistent at 100 per cent. In 2000, the percentage of students achieving higher grades at 38 per cent was well above the national average for all maintained schools. Year 13 students are making very good progress in their lessons. They show, for example, a sophisticated understanding of the terminology and concepts of skills acquisition. In their Advanced Subsidiary lessons, Year 12 students are, for example, developing well their knowledge and understanding of learning phases through very effectively organised opportunities for peer observation and evaluation.

134. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now very good across all years. There are no significant shortcomings in the quality of teaching – this is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning in lessons and the progress they make. All practical lessons, for example, reflect the department's learning ethos of 'acquisition, application and analysis'. The high expectations of teachers, the challenge they offer pupils and students, together

with the very positive attitudes and relationships amongst pupils and students, all help to create a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. All are thus enabled to learn and achieve very well. In a Year 10 boys' association football lesson, for example, all were fully involved in aspects of planning, performing and evaluating the effectiveness of their individual play. This deepened their knowledge and understanding of the principles involved and considerably improved the quality of their performance by the end of the lesson. Pupils and students are further made aware of their capabilities in lessons because teachers circulate well and offer constructive praise and criticism throughout. The effectiveness of this was clearly evident in a Year 11 girls' gymnastics lesson where they were developing their vaulting skills and in a Year 7 girls' gymnastics lesson where small group sequence work was the focus. On some occasions, though, there is a tendency for the teacher to tell pupils what they have achieved in summative sessions at the end of lessons rather than to involve them by asking for their views.

135. Clear introductions to lessons ensure that pupils are made fully aware of what is expected of them. Very effective demonstrations, where appropriate, also ensure pupils and students know what they have to do to make progress and develop their skills and techniques. In a Year 11 girls' trampoline lesson, for example, the teacher's demonstration and breakdown of the skills required for the back drop was very effective in this respect. Less confident pupils as well as the more physically capable were successfully motivated to improve the levels of their performance. The planning of lessons, which includes a structured variety of activities, is indicative of teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding of the games and activities being taught as is their very effective use of questioning and structured group discussions. This allows them not only to establish what pupils know and understand, but also enhances their speaking and listening skills and ensures they understand the terminology being used. The teaching of theoretical aspects in post-16 GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary lessons through practical activities and practical examples is particularly effective and deepens students' knowledge and understanding further. In a Year 13 biomechanics revision lesson, for example, the teacher very effectively explained Newton's laws of motion through practical demonstration. Well-planned and relevant homework is set and marked for all the accredited courses.
136. This is a strong, well-led and purposeful department that has a significant and positive impact on the life and ethos of the school. There has been good overall improvement since the last inspection but the derisory time allocation in Years 10 and 11 for the course that all follow means that pupils are not achieving the standards they are capable of by age 16. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the new statutory requirements. There is a range of accredited courses and post-16 students continue to have formal timetabled recreational provision on Wednesday afternoons. A very good range of extra-curricular activities continues to extend further opportunities for physical education. These include inter-school and house competitive fixtures as well as recreational opportunities. As a result of the dedication and enthusiasm of teachers, some of whom are from other departments, numerous individual pupils have gained representative honours at both district and county level and both boys' and girls' teams have won district championships in a range of sporting activities. High numbers of pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities throughout the year. Assessment procedures are well established and the new 'levels' for physical education have been introduced throughout Years 7 to 11. The quality and range of accommodation allows for a full programme of activities to be taught throughout the year. However, the lack of a dedicated teaching room for GCSE, GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary theory work detracts from the ethos of this provision. It makes it difficult to build upon work in practical lessons by, for example, having displays of key words and specific terminology as well as pupils' and students' work.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

137. In 2000 the results for candidates sitting the GCSE examination were very high compared with the national average and above the standard achieved in selective schools. The percentage of A* and A grades was the best in the school. Girls performed better than boys. Results showed an improvement over previous years in both the standards and the number of candidates. In the short course GCSE examination results were very high compared with the national average. In the A level examination results were below the national average. This was not typical of previous results and does not reflect work seen during the inspection. Illness and staffing difficulties offer an explanation.

138. In work seen the standard achieved by pupils in Year 9 is good being above that expected in the locally Agreed Syllabus. They have a good knowledge and understanding of what religion is and how faith is expressed through Christianity and the other major world religions. They have a good subject vocabulary and use it with confidence. However most lack empathy with the social and emotional aspects of believers' experience such as the community of the Eucharist or the excitement generated by Passover celebrations in a Jewish family. They are developing their own beliefs and values with some excellent examples of work in which pupils have expressed how their personal concept of God has matured. Most written work does not reflect adequately their standard in the subject with insufficient extended writing. Progress achieved is satisfactory. Some of the highest attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged in some lessons affecting the depth of their learning. In others homework is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that pupils make maximum progress in class time. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils due to good provision.
139. The standard of work of Year 11 GCSE candidates seen is very good. They make good progress and have developed a secure knowledge and understanding of the faiths studied. They can explain how belief affects attitudes to moral issues and can, with confidence justify their statements by referring to biblical and other sources. They are well-prepared for the examination and course work is thoughtfully constructed and presented. The standards achieved by pupils not taking the GCSE examination are satisfactory but do not reflect their potential. They know how faiths mark important events in life and understand the significance of these ceremonies. They can discuss moral issues with confidence and in some cases can link attitudes to beliefs and philosophies. The lack of a systematic record of written work and an external examination goal affects progress.
140. The standard of students' work seen in the final year of the A level course is very good. They have a good knowledge of Christian philosophy and ethics and of the period studied in the Old Testament. They achieve very well, have well organised files and write accurate and perceptive essays in which their sources are attributed. In discussion most can explain features of the topic and use their wider knowledge of the Bible to justify their statements. It was not possible during the inspection to judge the standards achieved by students whose religious education is provided as part of their A level General Studies course.
141. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. It is popular. The positive attitude of pupils and their very good behaviour complement the standard of teaching and make a major contribution to the standards achieved. They are keen to learn and are developing well their skills in collaboration and note-taking.
142. Overall the quality of teaching is good but there is a lack of consistency. Teachers have very good subject knowledge enabling them to teach with authority and to answer questions confidently and in depth. Their enthusiasm for the subject is transmitted to pupils and achieves participation and positive attitudes. Relationships between staff and pupils develop in a professional and friendly manner resulting in a mutual respect and shared enjoyment of the subject as pupils proceed through the school. Lessons are orderly and have a sense of purpose. In most cases the time is fully used with smooth transitions between activities. A variety of strategies maintain pupils' interest and systematically develop the skills necessary for successful learning although during the inspection there was little planned use of ICT. Apart from visits to local churches pupils have few opportunities for first hand experience of faith communities and festivals limiting their empathy with faiths other than Christianity.
143. The best teaching occurs in GCSE and A level examination classes where it is very good. Time is fully used and there are high expectations. A stimulating variety of approaches including lively teacher presentations, simulated TV interviews and active decision making makes learning interesting and enjoyable whilst being focused on achieving good examination grades. Marking of written work is accurate and informative. In Key Stage 3 classes and non-examination groups in Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In some lessons there is a lack of demand especially of the highest attaining pupils which are not challenged to achieve their full potential. Opportunities are missed to allow pupils to use their initiative and investigative skills in homework

preparation resulting in some class time not being effectively used. Expectations of pupils' written work in Key Stage 3 are not sufficiently high and marking which lacks rigour and comment allows some pupils to submit work which does not reflect their ability. Work is not assessed using the levels recommended in the Agreed Syllabus and therefore pupils do not know how their standards compare with expectations and with other subjects.

144. Management and leadership of the subject are good. A very positive ethos of enthusiasm and success has been established. The programme of work complies with the Agreed Syllabus and religious education is provided for all pupils. The leadership has vision and plans for the newly refurbished accommodation shortly to be provided. The best practice found in the department needs to be shared with colleagues so that more consistent standards are established and maintained especially in the marking and assessment of pupils' work. Subject resources in the school library are dated and do not answer the needs of the majority of pupils.

145. Since the last report high standards have been maintained and GCSE results have improved. Religious education is now provided for all students as part of their A level General Studies course. Instances of under-achievement mentioned previously are still apparent especially in Key Stage 3. Overall, improvement has been good.

OTHER COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

146. The school does not offer vocational courses. Beyond the subjects of the national curriculum, only media studies, sociology and economics are taught at A level. AS level citizenship is taught in Year 12 for the first time this year.

147. Standards at A level in media studies, sociology and economics are above the national average and in line with those for selective schools. This was confirmed by work seen during the inspection which, especially in sociology, was of a high standard with extended, analytical writing and penetrating analysis showing use and understanding of a wide range of sources. Insufficient evidence was seen to make judgements about the standard of work in citizenship, or about the quality of teaching overall in these subjects.