

INSPECTION REPORT

TWYNHAM SCHOOL

Sopers Lane, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 1JF.

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113873

Headteacher: Dr. T Fish

Reporting inspector: Dr. F Mikdadi
2447

Dates of inspection: 19th – 23rd March 2001

Inspection number: 184936

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sopers Lane Christchurch Dorset
Postcode:	BH23 1JF
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Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Michael Bradshaw
Date of previous inspection:	1 st May 1995

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11418	Donya Urwin	Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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10782	Henry Moreton	Team Inspector	English	
4738	David Berrisford	Team Inspector	Science	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Twynham is a large, mixed 11 – 18 comprehensive school with 1437 students - 660 girls and 777 boys. The sixth form has 219 students. The student population is predominantly white, with a very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are very few students whose first language is not English. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs (SEN), including those with statements of SEN, is slightly above the national average. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is close to the national average, although the proportion taking up their entitlement is below it. Students' attainment on entry to the school is close to the national averages in English, mathematics and science. However, the results of the Cognitive Abilities Tests (CATs), taken on entry to the school, show students on average have slightly below-average ability, especially in literacy skills.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many outstanding features. Students achieve standards above the national average in Key Stage 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Key Stage 3 test results in 2000 were in line with the national average in English and above it in mathematics and science. GCSE results at the higher grades (A* - C) were well above the national average in 2000. Advanced (A) level results were below the national average in 2000 but are set to improve. Leadership and teaching are both very good. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students make very good progress: from slightly below average attainment on entry, they achieve above-average results at the end of Key Stage 3, and well-above-average results at GCSE.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and behave very well.
- Relationships across the school are outstanding.
- Teaching is very good.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide very good leadership.
- The provision for enhancing students' personal development is very good.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities is outstanding.
- Procedures for ensuring students' welfare are outstanding.

What could be improved

- Accommodation is poor and impedes learning in physical education (PE). There are also shortcomings in the accommodation for modern languages, art and graphics. The sixth form common room is inadequate in size and is shabby and poorly maintained.

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 this time, the school has improved in almost every single area mentioned in the report. Three of the four key issues mentioned in the last report have been successfully resolved. The fourth key issue, regarding the daily corporate act of worship, has not yet been resolved. Other improvements have included the promotion of extensive use of information and communication technology, the introduction of an effective central reporting system, the improvement of literacy skills for students with special educational needs and consistent improvements in examination and test results. The quality of teaching, which was already good, has improved further and is now very good. All the lessons seen during the inspection were at least satisfactory and often a great deal better with almost half being very good or better. The school's leadership has an outstanding capacity for further improvements and for the achievement of yet higher standards of attainment.

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
Key Stage 3 tests	B	B	B	C
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	n/a	D	n/a

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

Reference to similar school is to those schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils who claim eligibility for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare school with pupils of similar background. There is no comparison with similar school at A levels.

Students have consistently achieved results which are above the national average in the Key Stage 3 tests in mathematics and science, and in line with the average in English. The Key Stage 3 English results in 2000 were lower than those of the previous three years, but evidence from the inspection indicates that they will rise again. The proportion of students who achieve five or more higher (A* - C) grades at GCSE results is well above the national average. Key Stage 3 test results are broadly in line with those of similar schools, and GCSE results are well above them. The school's first ever A level results were below the national average, but forthcoming results are set to improve. GNVQ results are very good in terms of both pass rate and quality. Key Stage 3 test and GCSE examination results have improved less rapidly than the national trend. Students mostly achieve their objectives for higher/further education or for employment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have very good attitudes to school and to their work. They want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good throughout the school.
Personal development and relationships	Opportunities for personal development are outstanding. Relationships between the students and between the students and their teachers are outstanding.
Attendance	Attendance is in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is lower than the national average.

Relationships are outstanding.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	very 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 in all lessons seen was at least sound. It was good or better in eighty five per cent of lessons seen and very good or better in almost half. There is little variation in quality between subjects. The best teaching was seen in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, whilst teaching was at least sound in all lessons seen, slightly less of it was good than in the other two key stages. This comparative weakness was due to a relative lack of challenge for the most able. Students are not as consistently encouraged to work independently in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as they are in the sixth form. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are effectively enhanced across subjects. There is a need to focus further on the teaching of spelling. Students' learning was at least sound in all lessons seen and good or better in eighty five per cent of them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range of learning experiences provided is very good. Continuity from primary schools is excellent. Provision for extra-curricular activities is outstanding.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Students with very differing needs are well provided for by the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has six students who also speak a language other than English. One student with English as an Additional Language needs support which he does not receive from the Local Education Authority's Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. The school gives this student very good pastoral support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision is very good with the provision for the students' moral and social development being outstanding. Provision for students' cultural development is less well developed than for other aspects of their personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for caring for students are outstanding. Although good, the use of assessment and other data for planning lessons is an area recognised by the school for further development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, the leadership team and key staff offer very good leadership and management. School development planning is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body works well in shaping the direction of the school and governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors offer strong support to the headteacher and his leadership team. Governors fulfil all statutory duties other than the requirements to offer students a daily corporate act of worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has begun to evaluate its work effectively. Lessons are observed by peer colleagues as well as by line managers. The strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning are discussed through a rigorous professional dialogue. The school has yet to disseminate the good practice its own review has already identified.
The strategic use of resources	Funds are well used. The school development plan identifies costs and the priorities for spending are rigorously monitored. The principles of best value are applied. Students' achievements compare well with those achieved nationally. Staff and resources are effectively used. The school's use of its new technology is outstanding. The school provides very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students achieve high standards. • The school helps students to learn and to make good progress. • The school promotes good values and teaches students how to maintain good behaviour. • Students are well behaved. • The school listens to parents and maintains effective contacts with them. • The school is constantly improving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilities for art, music and physical education are poor.

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive view of the school. Indeed in a few instances inspectors found the school to be even better than parents described it to be. One example amongst many is that of the parents speaking of behaviour as being good when inspectors judged it to be very good. Inspectors also agree with the parents' judgement of the poor quality of accommodation in physical education which is having a negative impact on their children's education. The other parental concern about the facilities for art and music has already begun to be addressed by the Local Education Authority and the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When students arrive at Twynham their attainment is average as shown by their end of Key Stage 2 national test results. The school's own Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs), taken on entry, show the average ability of the students to be slightly below the national average, especially in their literacy skills. On entry, students' attainment spans the full range of ability with a slight skew towards the lower end in years 10 and 11. In Years 7 and 8, however there are more students of above average ability.

2. In the statutory Key Stage 3 tests in 2000, students attained standards in line with the national average in English and above average in mathematics and science. These results were well below those of schools in similar contexts in English, below them in mathematics and in line with them in science. However, these results are not representative of the school's real achievement, as explained in the next paragraph. The English results in the Key Stage 3 tests in 2000 were considerably lower than those of the year before, when they were well above the national average and in line with the average for schools in similar circumstances. Students' current attainment in English should return the school to the satisfactory or better results of previous years. Results in mathematics have fluctuated over the last four years.

3. "Similar schools", "schools in similar contexts" and "schools in similar circumstances" are all expressions that refer to schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools. The inspection team found that whilst officially only seven per cent of pupils were eligible for free school meals, their own research showed that the true number eligible for this support was between fourteen per cent and sixteen per cent. The lower official figure therefore significantly underestimates the level of deprivation experienced by the school. Given this context, it is the judgement of the inspection team that the end of Key Stage 3 test results for those attaining Level 5 or above are above those of similar schools in science and in line with them in English and mathematics.

4. Inspection evidence from lesson observations also shows that students' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above average in science and in line with the national average in English and mathematics. Both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, standards of attainment are in line with the national expectations. In mathematics, standards of attainment are at Key Stage 3 in line with national expectations but improve through Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Standards of attainment in science are at least in line with, and frequently above, the national expectation. Standards are at least in line with national expectations and often higher in art, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, modern languages, music, physical education religious education and in other sixth form subjects. A slight exception to this is the fact that in modern languages many students' active language skills of speaking and writing do not fully match their passive skills of listening and reading which are at least in line with national expectations and frequently above.

5. The GCSE examination results at sixty six per cent are well above the national average of forty seven point six per cent for the proportion of students attaining five or more grades A* to C. Over the last three years the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C has been well above the national average. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to G was also above the national average for the same period. GCSE students' average points score has been average and for the last five

years, the rate of improvement in the school's GCSE results for all subjects was slower than the national trend. The school does well in GCSE given students' prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. Boys do as well as girls as a result of the school's specific targeting of their attainment. Students attained well above average GCSE results in 2000 in English, mathematics, art and design and technology. They attained above average results in business studies, drama, information technology, geography, German, music and physical education. GCSE results were in line with national averages in science and religious education and below in history and French.

6. At A level, the average points score per student was below the national average in 2000 – the first cohort of advanced level students going through the school's new sixth form. Current attainment in Year 13 is at least in line with course expectations in all subjects, and promises good results. During the inspection, attainment in all sixth form lessons seen was above average. Students' work scrutinised showed high standards of attainment in all subjects offered within the school with some fluctuation in attainment in subjects offered through the sixth form joint provision. Attainment was never less than sound. GNVQ results in 2000 were good; both pass rates and the quality of certificates were high. Current work by GNVQ students in all subjects promises equally good performances, with excellence in several areas.

7. By the time they leave, students are largely competent in literacy. Given that many come into the school with some weakness in literacy, there is clear evidence that the school's work has had a considerable impact. There is further evidence that literacy skills are enhanced across all subjects. Students read and write confidently in most subjects. Their spelling is largely satisfactory although there are inconsistencies between subjects in the way that spelling is addressed. There is a need for a more consistent approach to the learning of spelling across the subjects. Numeracy is a strong feature in some departments although it is not fully co-ordinated in a way that would reinforce learning within mathematics.

8. The overwhelming majority of students do well in the school. They make good progress and build on their previous learning well. Gifted and talented, as well as high-attaining, students are not always sufficiently challenged. The school has identified this as a priority area for teaching and learning and has begun to address the issue of ensuring a more rigorous regime for the highest-attaining students. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. There is only one student who needs support because he is at a very early stage in learning English as an additional language; he is not receiving this support. Despite the availability of the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant, and despite the headteacher's best efforts, the Local Education Authority has not allocated any help to this student. This student's lack of English restricts his access to the curriculum, his progress and his attainment. The school has done a very good job in trying to integrate him into the school and in trying to make him feel secure.

9. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have improved across all subjects. Test and examination results have also improved although the trend in improvement is slower than the national trend in the GCSE examination results.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The previous inspection report describes a school in which behaviour was generally excellent and students' attitudes were extremely positive. These characteristics have been sustained and a very strong school ethos continues to create a positive climate for learning. In classrooms and around the school students are consistently courteous and considerate and very well behaved. The school aims to encourage personal development, co-operation and self-motivation. These values are reflected in all that the school does and the standard of relationships is excellent. Many examples of collaborative and co-operative activity were seen in lessons during the inspection, such as in English, science, and RE. Students do take time to consider the impact of their actions on others, making efforts to listen and instinctively providing support when appropriate.

11. There was no evidence of bullying or oppression during the inspection. The school has rigorous procedures to respond to incidents if they do occur, and although there were a significantly higher than average number of exclusions last year, all staff work hard to keep even the most disruptive students at school. Parents and students report that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with quickly and efficiently and the use of a sophisticated cascade system of achievement awards encourages personal effort and thoughtfulness. Students demonstrate very good initiative, readily helping others without prompting such as in information and communication technology rooms, as library helpers and there is an excellent level of interest and involvement in school activities. Formal opportunities to take responsibility are offered across each key stage. Sixth form students act as mentors to Year 7 tutor groups.

12. The school works hard to create an ordered community. Students are well motivated and interested in personal development. All adults in the school provide reliable role models, attitudes are responsible and students consistently demonstrate respect for one another and for the school environment. The school provides an extensive range of additional activities to support learning in the classroom; these are well supported and greatly appreciated by students and parents.

13. Attendance is in line with the national average with a lower than usual incidence of unauthorised absence. Students obviously enjoy coming to school. There have been recent efforts involving all staff to emphasise the importance of punctuality; expectations have been clarified and this has had a significant impact on reducing late arrivals into school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching overall is very good. All the lessons seen during the inspection were at least sound and eighty five per cent were at least good. In almost half of all lessons seen the quality of teaching was at least very good and in eight per cent it was outstanding. At both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, in over ninety per cent of lessons the quality of teaching was at least good. Similarly, in Key Stage 3, in four out of five lessons teaching was also at least good. The school's monitoring and evaluation of teaching has contributed to the high standards of teaching in the school. There are only a few inconsistencies in the quality of teaching between year groups and examples of the best teaching can be seen in almost every year. The school should continue to look closely at the quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 where there is some lack of challenge to the gifted and talented and to high attaining students. The school development plan has already identified this as an area for action.

15. The quality of teaching is at its best in those lessons where teachers show very good subject specialism. Their teaching of basic skills is good and their expectations are consistently high. The teaching of literacy is generally good across the school, whereas the

teaching of numeracy is more uneven. Teachers make good use of time, resources and classroom assistants. Lessons are brisk with a good pace of work. Weaknesses in the teaching are only relative. These relate to the lack of challenge for the most able. Teachers also need to encourage students to become independent workers and to take responsibility for their own learning. Teaching in physical education (PE) is limited by the poor accommodation although teachers make every effort to overcome their difficulties and produce successful lessons.

16. Teachers help students to learn successfully. They also help them to understand what they need to do next in order to improve. This is most impressive in the sixth form where students speak fluently and intelligently about their work, about their assessment and about what they need to do to attain the next level of excellence. Teachers' questioning strategies are largely effective in eliciting the extent of students' understanding. Some teachers use questioning strategies very well for example in an outstanding Year 9 English lessons the teacher's questions established the scenario and probed and prompted students towards a deeper understanding of Macbeth.

17. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good with almost all teachers teaching within their subject expertise. Teachers infect their students with their enthusiasm for their subject. In sixth form lessons in particular subject knowledge is very strong and students themselves exhibit considerable understanding of, and enthusiasm for, their subject.

18. Teachers plan lessons well. In order to build further on current good practice, teachers need to plan lessons with a specific focus on how to improve students' performance further. In a Year 9 music lesson, the teacher provided well-differentiated material so that students of differing abilities were given a chance to achieve their potential.

19. Teachers invariably manage time, resources and other adults helping in lessons very effectively. Lessons run at a good pace and activities are linked productively. In a very good Year 11 design and technology lesson, the teacher made consistent references to potential resources including ICT. These references, coupled with the clear high expectations, meant that students were sufficiently motivated to make very good progress.

20. Teachers assess students' work well, and very well in the sixth form, especially on GNVQ courses. Day-to-day marking is of sound to good quality, with helpful targets for improvement in some subjects. The consistency with which assessment feeds back into teachers' planning should be improved.

21. Behaviour in lessons is invariably very good. Relationships between the teachers and their students are outstanding. In one outstanding history lesson students could hardly contain their enthusiasm for their research on why European countries allowed Adolf Hitler to do what he did. Relationships were outstanding and allowed excellent discussions leading to students gaining a secure grasp of the causes and significance of key historical events.

22. Homework set is very good. It generally conforms to the timetable, extends students' understanding and their classroom learning and is frequently imaginative. Inspectors do not share the concerns of some parents about the amount of homework.

23. Students with special educational needs are well taught. As a consequence they make good progress. Special educational needs teachers, including those visiting the school, take very good care of their students. Relationships are outstanding. Students largely understand their targets for improvement. In a very good Year 10 mathematics lesson the exceptionally good relationships within the group and between the teacher and the students allowed the students with special educational needs to make excellent progress. They

attained relatively high standards. They were helped to achieve and their self-image was well promoted by the teacher.

24. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching, already described as being very good overall, has improved further. All lessons seen were at least satisfactory and often a great deal better. The weaknesses mentioned in the last report, such as the slow pace in a few lessons and the lack of structure in others, have been addressed and successfully overcome.

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

25. The quality and range of learning opportunities offered to students are very good. This is partly the result of a review of the time allocated to subject teaching and for tutors to work with their tutor groups, which was one of the key issues of the last inspection.

26. The curriculum provided for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form consortium is broad and well balanced except that time for science in Key Stage 4 is a little low. The school meets all statutory requirements for the National Curriculum in Key Stage 3 and implements the regulations for the work-related curriculum appropriately in Key Stage 4. The balance of the curriculum is a good compromise between the requirements of Technology College status, aesthetic and other opportunities. Within the sixth form full advantage is taken of the partnership with two other schools to offer a very wide range of academic and vocational courses. The range of vocational courses is sound and improving; it is currently better at Level 3 (advanced) than Level 2 (intermediate).

27. The school succeeds well in designing its curriculum to the needs of its students and to make it accessible as possible to all. Careful liaison with local primary schools promotes continuity in the core subjects and for students with special educational needs.

28. The school operates a broad curriculum in Key Stage 4. Ten full and one short GCSE courses are available to the more academic students, whilst groups of more vocationally biased students or those with special needs can opt, with careful advice, for a modified curriculum involving an imaginative work-related learning strand (Silver Group) or a alternative curriculum with enhanced support (Gold Group). There has been careful monitoring of these groups and the school is keen to improve the integration of these courses and students with the main school curriculum for next year. Provision for the most-able students is presently devolved to faculties, after identification of individuals from the school's records of prior attainment and learning progress towards minimum target levels in Key Stage 3. The school recognises that the provision will require further monitoring to ensure that it is sufficiently challenging for this group of students.

29. Provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy is developing through the school. Literacy is becoming effectively managed across the subjects and numeracy skills are becoming more prominent within mathematics and some other departments. At present some key skills teaching is provided within work-related learning in Key Stage 4 and during general studies in the sixth form. Key skills are only certificated within Key Stage 4. Particularly since the awarding of Technology College status, information and communication technology provision and the skills development of student's have improved dramatically.

30. The provision of personal, social and health education, including sex and drug education, is very good. There is now a structured programme of one hour per fortnight which is common across the Christchurch partnership and supported by a comprehensive scheme of work. This programme is taught by form tutors who have strong relationships

with their tutor groups. The school uses its good links with local agencies and individual members of the community to enrich this programme.

31. Careers education and guidance are very good. From Year 9 they form elements of the personal and social development programme. The contract for careers guidance is delivered efficiently and works well. School tutors and curriculum managers are meticulous in the care they take when advising students how to select suitable pathways from the wide range of courses and destinations available. The quality of many vocational courses is exceptional. Work experience is provided in both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form; it is well managed and of high quality.

32. The school's extra-curricular provision is excellent. There is a vast range of "clubs" functioning at all available times of the school week, some on a daily basis. There is even a Saturday club for science. The range of activities encompasses the academic and sporting alongside the cultural, technical and electronic. All years are catered for and attendance is sustained at impressive levels. Most of the school's information and communication technology equipment is in constant use. There is a good range of visits, some of them abroad, for cultural, social and academic purposes.

33. The provision for students' spiritual development is generally good. There are good contributions from art, music, physical education and religious education. Times for reflection are a feature of assemblies and some classroom experiences. Technology is effective in promoting awe and wonder. Some form of assembly is now organised for all students on a daily basis. These are well organised and carefully planned occasions, but they do not always contain an act of worship.

34. The provision for students' moral and social development is excellent. The ethos of the school is clear and highly visible. Policies link strongly with practice, teachers have high expectations of behaviour, and relationships throughout the school display impressive levels of trust and mutual respect. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility and to display initiative. This is not only true for functions and tasks that benefit the school but also for community contributions or charity work. This way of treating people is evident in the day to day running of the school, both around the school and in the best lessons. It is one of the key reasons for its growing popularity with parents.

35. The provision for cultural development is sound overall but variable. Art extends into the surroundings and the school mounts many music and drama productions of high quality. Multicultural education does feature within religious education and the personal and social education programme. However the school is less effective in the systematic celebration of our society's cultural diversity. Students are exposed to a range of cultures in English, art, geography, drama, history, music and religious education, but the school does not provide a coherent programme of multi cultural education across the curriculum.

36. The school is particularly successful with its links into the community and with partner institutions. At an individual level there is an excellent student mentoring programme involving community members. On a larger scale, technology links are extensive and highly beneficial. Work experience networks are outstanding. Links with primary schools are strong and well used. Co-operation levels between the three schools forming the sixth form partnership is very good with real determination to overcome the inevitable time tabling restrictions. Relationships with the local college are excellent and close working here supports the outstanding success of vocational elements in the school's curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school continues to provide an excellent environment which offers care and support for the benefit of all students. There is a strong sense of order and security and the school is held in high regard by the local community for the safe and considerate atmosphere that it provides. Pastoral care is excellent, built around a well-developed infrastructure which allows a flexible response to the individual needs and circumstances of each student, such as the establishment of gold and silver groups. Educational and personal support is built on a foundation of very positive relationships and energetic community links and an excellent standard of care has been achieved as a result. Reliable induction arrangements are in place and students are well prepared for their move into further education or employment.

38. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress across the curriculum. Practice is particularly strong in art, history, information and communication technology and special educational needs provision and student involvement in negotiated target setting is well developed. However, although academic assessment and recording of progress is very thorough, its use to guide curricular planning and raise standards in the classroom is inconsistent across all subjects. Plans are well placed to address this weakness. There are excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and personal development and very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance.

39. There is a comprehensive working policy on health and safety. The resources manager holds responsibility for overall co-ordination supported by a committee structure and all those involved respond promptly to any issues which require attention. Policy and practice are effective: no significant health and safety issues were found. The pastoral liaison tutor is the designated person for child protection and close liaison is maintained with relevant authorities concerning the well being of students. School staff know the students very well and both teachers and support staff make a significant contribution to the provision of a safe and harmonious environment to support learning in the classroom.

40. There is excellent, well-informed advice and support for students with special educational needs. The lack of English as an Additional Language support from the Local Education Authority is unacceptable.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. The quality of partnership with parents continues to be very good. A wide range of information to parents is provided through the prospectus, newsletters, consultation evenings, home visits, annual reports and surveys. The school has worked quickly to develop online resources for parents and these have made a significant contribution to improved partnership with parents and the establishment of excellent links. The school has used several formal surveys to monitor the effectiveness of relationships with parents and many have positive views about what the school does to help students make good progress. The headteacher, leadership team and key staff maintain an open approach to parent concerns; complaints are taken seriously and resolved quickly. Special events are well attended and enjoyed by parents.

42. Individual review grades are provided regularly throughout the year to inform parents about their children's progress towards target minimum levels. This is supported by annual written reports which aim to provide a detailed and informative analysis of students' attainment and progress. This is achieved in some subjects, such as in art at Key Stage 4 where personal targets are included and clear guidance is offered about future direction and action required. This level of detail is inconsistent across other areas of the curriculum. In addition there are regular consultation evenings when parents and teachers can discuss

student knowledge and progress, and additional action planning events are organised to consider the specific needs of individual students who require additional support. Inspectors could find no evidence to support the views of a relatively high proportion of parents who expressed concern at a lack of information about their children's progress.

43. Parents make a very good contribution to students' education through their involvement in the compilation of logbooks and homework and by offering practical support during school trips and visits. A minority of parents are critical of several areas of the school's work, especially homework, information about students' progress and the closeness of their relationship with the school. This is surprising since the school has been proactive in developing relationships and improving communication links, even offering IT tuition to those parents who wish to provide appropriate support to students at home. The school has introduced a Home-School Agreement which reliably describes the expectations and responsibilities attributed to the school, parents and students. In the view of inspectors, these aspects of school life are effective.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The school is very well led. Governors, the headteacher and the leadership team, together with other key staff, are strongly committed to increasing students' standards of achievement. The headteacher has created an ethos wherein students enjoy consistently high quality provision. Teachers subscribe to the leadership's purpose and the outstanding relationships between them and their students give the school a very positive ethos. The school's leadership has an outstanding capacity for further improvements and for the achievement of yet higher standards of attainment.

45. The governing body is very effective in fulfilling its statutory duties and in ensuring that the school continues to succeed. They understand the school's many strengths and few relative weaknesses and work well with the leadership group to ensure continuous improvement. They play an effective role in working with the headteacher to set the future direction of the school. Their committees work effectively, maintaining a close working relationship with key staff. Governors give a great deal of their time and effort to the school. Although most statutory requirements are met, governors need to ensure that school provides a daily corporate act of worship. The time allocated to science in Key Stage 4 is below the national average. Governors have set clear targets for members of the leadership team. In turn, teachers, as part of their Performance Management, have agreed clear and achievable targets for their work.

46. The headteacher has been in post for less than one year and has gained the confidence of both governors and staff. He has established excellent working relationships with everyone in the school and its community. He has a strong and successful commitment to team work and to engaging staff in succeeding in meeting the new challenges being set for the school. He has introduced a new system of setting targets for the minimum levels to be attained by the end of each key stage by every student. These are not yet used as consistently as they should be in the planning of teaching and learning. The system was only recently introduced and the school is well aware of the need to ensure that the use of data becomes an integral part of teaching and learning and of setting targets for individual students.

47. The leadership team has put together an effective programme which enables them to meet regularly, discuss issues, consult colleagues and make decisions accordingly. They are a very good team and team members complement each other effectively. Each team member takes responsibility for at least one faculty area. Staff have a high level of confidence in their senior managers.

48. Overall, the leadership team's positive qualities are replicated by subject and pastoral team leaders. Subject and pastoral team leaders are efficient, effective, hard working, conscientious and largely self critical in a way that allows each area to move forward effectively. Subject areas monitor teaching and learning through peer and line management observations. Findings from observations are discussed, although these are not yet fully embedded within strategies for planning further improvements and for sharing good practice.

49. The special educational needs department is well managed. The co-ordinator gives clear educational direction and promotes high standards. Students make at least good progress and their learning is good. Staff have a clearly shared commitment to improvement. Accommodation and resources for the department are good and they are effectively used. They help to ensure that the curriculum is effectively taught. Statutory requirements are fully met.

50. The monitoring of attainment and progress is very good. The school has a rich database of students' prior attainment although insufficient use is as yet made of these data in planning teaching and learning. The school development plan is very good. It effectively identifies the school's priorities for improvement and sets clear targets for achieving them. It is clearly costed.

51. Continuing staff development is very well planned and carried out. The assistant headteacher in charge of staff development has an excellent computerised system to keep clear records of staff development needs and provision. The system for ensuring that staff development relates to the school's as well as the individual's needs is very effective. In this, and many other areas, the school's use of information and communication technology is outstanding.

52. School funding is well used. Financial management, including the use of resources including specific grants, is outstanding. The school achieves very good value for money. The school has an outstanding member of the leadership team in charge of financial matters. Monitoring is effective.

53. Teachers are well qualified and their qualifications and experience are well matched to the students' needs. The school has an effective induction programme for its new staff. All teachers are observed teaching and feedback is given within the context of clear professional dialogue. The results of lesson observations should be used further in planning teaching and learning. Newly-qualified teachers are well supported and given a very good induction programme. Administrative and support staff are excellent and are used effectively to free teachers to get on with their classroom teaching.

54. The school occupies an attractive campus. Accommodation is largely attractive, well looked after and free of litter and graffiti. Displays around the school are attractive and create a good learning environment. The school should use displays further to celebrate British cultural diversity and to encourage students to see pictures of successful role models from the minority ethnic groups. There are serious shortcomings in the accommodation in certain subject areas: physical education, modern languages and the arts. The school also has some unattractive and old-fashioned huts that lack appropriate modern amenities. The sixth form common room is small, cramped and unattractive.

55. The physical education accommodation is poor. The inadequate indoor and outdoor accommodation, as well as facilities, restrict students' learning. The school hall is of such dimensions as to hinder trampolining and badminton work. The small size of the swimming pool restricts the number that could be taught at one time and this places unacceptable

pressures on both teachers and students. The lack of all-weather surfaces in the school is a serious hindrance to learning and to progress. The playing fields which were water-logged in three pre-inspection visits and throughout the inspection week, have reportedly been in this state since October 2000. The school governors and its leadership team need to work closely with their community and Local Education Authority in order to rectify these shortcomings. Modern language lessons are held all over the school, causing fragmentation within the department. The arts block is cramped and unattractive; the Local Education Authority has recently committed itself to a refurbishment programme to eliminate this shortcoming. The school is well resourced especially with information and communication technology equipment which is effectively used.

56. Since the last inspection the school has made major improvements in many areas. Every point for improvement mentioned in the previous report has been successfully addressed including three of the four key issues. The fourth key issue that is still unresolved is the provision of a daily act of corporate worship.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to develop further the standards achieved by students and the quality of educational provision, the school should: work closely with the LEA and the local community to bring about improvements to the accommodation:

- most importantly, to improve the quality of facilities for PE where these restrict learning;
- to reduce the fragmented accommodation in the modern languages department;
- to improve the art and graphics block;
- to improve common room accommodation for the sixth form.

(Paragraphs: 54, 55, 137, 151)

In addition to the key issue above, the school should consider including the following other relative weaknesses in its action plan:

- to press the LEA to provide appropriate support for the one student at a very early stage in learning English; (Paragraphs: 8, 40)
- to improve provision for pupils' cultural development to bring it into line with the excellent quality of the provision for their moral and social development." (Paragraph 35)

SIXTH FORM

58. The sixth form forms part of the Christchurch Sixth Form - a partnership of three schools providing post-16 education for over four hundred students. This is only the third year of the partnership's existence, and the year 2000 was the first in which Twynham entered students for advanced (A) level and advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) examinations. The school has achieved a great deal in this short time: this is a good and improving sixth form which provides good value for money. Recruitment is rising from within the three partnership schools, as is the number of applications to join the Christchurch Sixth Form from other schools.

59. The school's first set of GNVQ results was very good: all of the small number of students entered in 2000 passed the examination, and almost all gained distinctions or merits. Both pass rate and quality were above the national average, and these students achieved good results in the light of their GCSE grades: the students made good progress in vocational courses and the school provided good added value. The pass rate at A level was

just above the national average, but the quality of grades was below it; the proportion of the highest grades (A and B) was low. Boys' grades were well below the average while those of the girls were close to it. However, almost all students achieved at least satisfactory standards in the light of their GCSE qualifications - students made sound progress and the value added by the school was at least satisfactory. In art and business studies, students achieved good results in both GNVQ and A level courses; A level results in media studies and English were also good.

60. Current sixth form work seen during the inspection was of a good standard. Almost all was at least in line with the expectations of the course, whether A/AS level or GNVQ, and most was above them; the school is therefore well placed to achieve its predicted improvement in pass rates and in quality of grades. Work seen in GNVQ courses in business education, information technology and art was of an excellent standard, promising a high proportion of distinction and merit grades. The website and PowerPoint presentations made by advanced GNVQ information technology students were of an exceptional standard, and the project presentations in both Year 12 and Year 13 art groups were also very good. In the advanced supplementary level photography course, able students, supported by skilled teaching and excellent resources, produced imaginative and well-realised work of a high standard. While good work was seen in all subjects, standards in some A/AS level courses could be raised still higher for those at the very top of the ability range. In design technology, taught by a sixth form partner institution, standards are sound but should be better given the very high standards achieved by those students at GCSE. In English, standards are good but more students should achieve the highest grades. Students' underdeveloped study skills are one contributory factor; another is the loss of continuity caused by moving among the three sites. This is particularly true in design and technology, in which students are not spending sufficient time in the workshops outside of lessons, and in which the students' ability to liaise with their teachers is limited. Provision for other subjects such as sociology is very good.

61. Teaching in the sixth form is of a very good standard. Teaching is always at least satisfactory; around ninety per cent is at least good and over half very good or excellent. These are first-rate figures. Teaching on the GNVQ courses is even better - it is always very good or excellent. Teachers not only know their subjects very well, they also know the examination requirements in depth and use this knowledge to help students reach higher grades. Expectations are high: students are expected to work hard and are challenged intellectually. Teachers choose methods well in an attempt to make the work lively and to promote students' learning skills. The close links with the business community in GNVQ courses, enabling students to handle real-life projects for real-life clients, are very motivating and raise standards. Frequent use is made of research in small groups, followed by presentation of findings to other students, in advanced and advanced supplementary courses such as physics, media studies, mathematics and sociology. This is very effective, especially when the students' research skills are good: Year 12 students in sociology had chosen to undertake demanding studies and had carried out well-chosen research methods in pairs. Imaginative use is often made of homework. Relationships are excellent. Students listen to and support each other well; when seen at its best, such as in an A level history lesson about twentieth-century Russia, students challenge the teacher's view and demand evidence to justify opinions - always in a professionally courteous way. Students' work is well marked, with thorough advice provided on how to improve. Teachers and students make very good use of information and communication technology to promote detailed, up-to-date understanding and to sharpen skills.

62. Teaching has a positive effect on learning. Learning in the sixth form is good, and very good on vocational courses. Students learn at a good pace as a result of the very good teaching. They work hard in lessons and at home, work well together and challenge and

support each other. The confident use of information and communication technology, ranging from PowerPoint presentations to the brief use of a word-processor to type up notes for circulating to other students, promotes learning very effectively.

63. At present, students' learning and progress are limited by their study skills. Most find it hard to take notes fluently while the teacher speaks, and they do not always use their private study time to good effect. Some students find the leap from GCSE to A/AS level styles of learning very large. This may have implications for work in Year 11, for early work in Year 12 or for 'bridging courses'. Teachers need the opportunity to consider how best to help able, older students learn. The small number of students following the distance learning course in A level politics enjoy its learning style, in which the tutor acts as consultant and carries out surgery sessions by video conference; this may provide a useful case study of learning for teachers to consider.

64. The curriculum provided by the three-school partnership is of very good quality. It is very broad and timetabled well so as to provide flexibility. Provision for advanced (Level 3) courses is very good, while that for Level 2 is satisfactory but should be expanded if the school is to achieve the fully comprehensive sixth form to which it aspires. The school (and the partnership) has recognised this and included it in its development plan. The school provides a very good range of opportunities for students to extend their curriculum and make it coherent: key skills, general studies, community involvement, sport, work experience and careers guidance are all of very good quality.

65. The sixth form is very well led and managed. The team which leads the sixth form has a clear view of its aims and purposes, its strengths and weaknesses, and a clear vision of where development and improvement are needed. These analyses and plans are complemented by those of the head of vocational education; together they have well-argued plans for the development of the curriculum and other opportunities provided by the school and the partnership. The heads of sixth form take a strong personal interest in each student's progress through regular discussion with them and their tutors and by monitoring the detailed progress tracking system. Under their leadership, the sixth form has expanded and improved.

66. The sixth form is a lively community which provides a very good social context for the personal development of its students. The principal students undertake representative functions and chair the various sixth form committees - bodies which organise sixth form events and charitable functions and which receive and deal with student comments. Sixth form students also act as mentors to support the learning of younger and less able students, and to assist in the organisation of classes in Year 7. Senior managers are making effective efforts to ensure that the sixth form remains in touch with the main school and provides role models for younger students.

67. Provision for the sixth form - curriculum, teaching quality and student support - is very good. Group sizes are economic and completion rates sound. Student activity rates should be improved: the proportion of the week in which students are not being taught is high, averaging over forty per cent in Year 13; students are not always able to make best use of this private study time. Examination results are very good at GNVQ and sound and promise improvement at A/AS level; all courses show added value from GCSE which is at least satisfactory and good in the case of GNVQ courses. Students mature and make progress. The value for money provided for the sixth form is therefore good.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	181
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	39	38	15	0	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	1218	219
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	97	4

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	51	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	343	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.11
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	129	111	240

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	102	98
	Girls	84	73	72
	Total	169	175	170
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73.2 (78)	74.8 (71)	74.2 (62)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20.3 (48)	47.0 (41)	40.6 (26)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	102	98
	Girls	84	73	72
	Total	169	175	170
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79.8 (74)	77.7 (74)	61.9 (80)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39.9 (20)	47.9 (46)	30.1 (39)
	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	106	99	205

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	69	101	104
	Girls	66	98	99
	Total	135	199	203
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (69)	97 (94)	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	47 (46)
	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	16 88
	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	30	40	70

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	11.7	16.4	14.4 (n/a)	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	14.5	16.6	15.3 (n/a)	n/a	n/a	n/a

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	16 100
	National	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	1
White	1426
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	37	5
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)	82.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	81
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1591

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.75
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	20.9
Key Stage 4	15.65
Sixth Form	13.74

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	3089874
Total expenditure	3083636
Expenditure per pupil	2516
Balance brought forward from previous year	-210836
Balance carried forward to next year	-204598

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1437
Number of questionnaires returned	205

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	56	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	58	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	69	5	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	58	20	5	3
The teaching is good.	33	63	1	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	57	19	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	51	4	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	45	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	20	58	17	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	36	52	6	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	61	6	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	50	6	0	6

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents spoke mostly in positive terms. They expressed satisfaction with the school's quality of educational provision. Their children achieve high standards. The school helps their children to learn and to make good progress. The school promotes good values and teaches their children how to maintain good behaviour. Their children are well behaved. The school listens to parents and maintains effective contacts with them. The school is constantly improving.

Parents expressed serious concerns about the facilities for art, music and physical education which they described as poor.

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

ENGLISH

68. Standards of attainment in English on entry to the school are in line with the national average, and are still average at the end of Key Stage 3. The average - and lower-attaining students achieve well. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, an above - average proportion of students achieved the nationally - expected level (5) but a below-average proportion achieved the higher (6+) levels. In 2000, standards were well below those in schools with students from similar backgrounds. Students' prior attainment in literacy for the cohort was, however, below the national average. The school has therefore added value to the students' English performance. Inspection findings indicate that standards are better than the 2000 Key Stage 3 test results and the similar schools measures suggest.

69. Standards attained by students aged sixteen are above the national average. In the 2000 GCSE English Language examination the national average for grades A* to C was fifty six per cent. The school's result was seventy two per cent. Attainment in the English Literature examination was even better. The national average for grades A* to C was sixty one per cent; Twynham's result was eighty eight per cent. In the GCSE drama examination the national average for grades A* to C was seventy per cent. The school's result was ninety eight per cent. Inspection findings indicate that standards in English in Key Stage 4 are good, and in drama and media studies they are very good. Achievement of students in lessons is good as a result of consistently good teaching and the positive attitudes of students.

70. Standards in the sixth form are satisfactory and inspection indicates that most students are meeting course requirements. In 2000 all except one of those who entered the English advanced level examinations achieved a grade E or above. All who entered for the A level in drama achieved a grade E or better. Progress for these students is satisfactory overall.

71. Since the last inspection, standards in Key Stage 3 have risen in line with the national average. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs make good progress because of the good provision made for them. The teaching of literacy across other subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory.

72. Standards have risen at Key Stage 4. At the last inspection they were judged to be in line with national expectations. In both English Language and Literature standards improved markedly in both 1999 and 2000. This is because of the good level of subject expertise of teachers and the hard work of students of all levels of attainment. In drama, standards have been consistently high. The attainment of both boys and girls compares favourably with their respective national averages. At GCSE, English Language, English Literature, and especially drama, are among the most successful subjects in the school, and targets set for 2000 were met. The only area of weakness is that too few students attain the higher levels A* or A, though this is not the case in English Literature. The school's strategies already in place should address this. Virtually all candidates who enter all examinations attain a GCSE pass grade of G and above. This is better than the national averages.

73. Inspection findings show that students in the sixth form are working in line with their prior attainment, and most are meeting course requirements. With just a few exceptions, most are well motivated.

74. Teaching in English and media studies is good overall. It is often very good, and sometimes excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching in drama is very good. All teachers have the skills necessary to teach students in classes with a wide range of ability. Where teachers interest students they respond very well, as in a lesson on Macbeth where effective questioning enthused all students, including those who found the text challenging. In another lesson on Macbeth, a different teacher involved all students in a very successful role-play exercise which enable all students to develop their understanding of the main characters and the nuances of the plot. Where teachers set tasks that encourage students to work collaboratively they also respond very positively, as in a drama lesson where they rehearsed presentations to an audience about the themes of 'alcoholism', 'death row' and 'women's refuge'. Relationships are very good in English and drama throughout the school. There is a positive working atmosphere in all lessons. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to develop students' appreciation of the importance of step-by-step approaches and attention to detail. Clear learning objectives are made explicit to students, and planning focuses on what teachers expect different students to learn by the end of the lesson. Too many timed targets and interventions by the teacher are sometimes detrimental to the pace of working. Teachers' use of questioning to encourage students to recap prior learning and to extend familiar ideas into new areas is good. Marking is regular, and students are explicitly told what they need to do to improve their work. Reports to parents are informative and the targets set are usually precise. Most teachers have lively classrooms with interesting displays of students' work. Provision for the use of information technology is good, and there are some very good features, as in students' presentation of their work on the media and in their use of individualised learning programmes that help their writing.

75. Day-to-day management is good and the leadership of the subject ensures that students come to English lessons knowing that they will be expected to work hard. The use of assessment procedures is enabling most students to make good progress but the department needs to use data selectively to prioritise what is really important. The school needs to track literacy rigorously across the subjects. There is a need for greater monitoring of the quality of work that is done in workbooks. The school's progress in implementing a literacy strategy is good.

76. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in raising standards, even though there is still some under-achievement by the higher-attaining students. This is the key issue that the department now needs to address.

77. There is good evidence of literacy skills improving students' performance across a wide range of subjects. Students read with confidence, fluency and understanding in music. They write with confidence, fluency and understanding in religious education, history, design and technology and information technology. Spelling is satisfactory in most subjects. Use of vocabulary, including technical vocabulary, is very good in design and technology and is developing well in information technology, music and religious education. The management of literacy throughout the school is satisfactory, but the monitoring and evaluation of strategies is not rigorous enough, as instanced, by inconsistencies in the way that spelling is addressed in the different subjects.

MATHEMATICS

78. Standards of mathematics by the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national average but a little below those of similar schools. There has been improvement since 1996 but at a rate slower than the national rate. In contrast, standards at GCSE are well above the national average and also compare well with those of similar schools. In the sixth form, A level results are average and the subject is growing in popularity.

79. The attainment of the students in class work is average through Key Stage 3 but improves in Key Stage 4. The A level classes seen were working at a good standard. The recent trend of gradual improvement in the prior attainment of incoming students suggests there is now some underperformance in Key Stage 3. A small number of students achieve similarly well in Key Stage 3 but more could be expected to reach these good standards. In Key Stage 4, more should be achieved by the most able students. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages.

80. Within mathematics lessons the department continues to show the strong investigative approaches to learning that were praised in the last inspection report. This is producing some high quality display work and some fine pieces of GCSE coursework. Numeracy standards are good in areas of measurement and calculation, and are improving in mental, oral and visual skills. Generally the algebraic understanding of students is good. Ideas of shape and space are well developed and the skills of data handling are well understood.

81. Numeracy is well developed and used in some subjects but not yet fully co-ordinated to reinforce learning within the mathematics department. Mathematics teaching is making a good contribution to literacy and oracy with some attention to vocabulary and some fine speaking and listening practice. Information and communication technology use has improved.

82. There is a lot of high quality teaching within the department. All the teaching seen was satisfactory or better and nearly half was very good or excellent. This amount of good practice puts pressure on the teaching that is more mundane. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of the students and plan in some detail how they would be helped to achieve precisely - expressed learning objectives. A lot of active group work, reporting back to the class or demonstrating on the board, raised the levels of student to student discussion and error correction.

83. In less-effective lessons, teachers tend to talk at the class for too long and keep too inflexibly to textbook presentations. Occasionally the work set is unchallenging and simply too easy for the students. However, the classroom responsiveness of students is a real credit to the school and learning and behaviour in mathematics lessons reflect this and provide an excellent foundation on which to maximise the learning rate in more lessons.

84. The curriculum conforms to statutory requirements and its quality and range have been improved since the last inspection. In addition to improving information and communication technology and decreasing group sizes in Key Stage 4, the department has acted strongly on 'profile-raising' activities and has started to implement ideas and initiatives from the National Numeracy Strategy. This has included visits to primary schools, running a Summer Numeracy School and helping students who arrive with low numeracy competences. A strength of the department's present scheme of work is the quantity of interesting teaching ideas it contains. However it would support the improvement of some teaching more strongly if it were reorganised around more precisely-expressed learning

objectives and also if it gave teachers more advice about differentiating the curriculum content to their sets and within the sets.

85. The department's assessment recording and reporting procedures are very thorough and supportive. Developments in the tracking of students' learning, setting them appropriate targets and then helping them to achieve these, are impressive.

86. This is a well-managed and organised faculty which is strongly staffed. The large teaching team, many of whom have major responsibilities outside of the mathematics department, has developed and put into practice a common approach to teaching mathematics. There is room for improvement in the way the whole school recognises, prioritises and acts on the need to ensure that mathematics continues to contribute fully to the successes of Twynham School. At present the department's mathematics improvement plan is insufficiently focussed on evidence-based teaching and learning actions that will raise standards for all in Key Stage 3 and for the most able in Key Stage 4. It will also be necessary to plan out the small step actions and monitoring procedures that will ensure the effective implementation of this plan.

SCIENCE

87. The science faculty provides a firm base upon which student's gain understanding, knowledge and interest in science. Standards in science have, however, been variable since the last inspection due to a number of contributory factors, many beyond the control of the department. In the most recent Key Stage 3 tests, the faculty managed to reverse a downward trend in results ensuring that these results were well above those achieved nationally and in line with those achieved by students in similar schools. Results in the GCSE Examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 were disappointing when compared with those obtained in previous years. Although the first results in science subjects at A level in 2000 were generally below the national average, they were in line with the school's average. The faculty has the potential to raise standards even further and, following a period of relative turbulence, is in the process of development, building on a strong base of consistently good teaching.

88. Achievement in lessons and in students' workbooks is at least in line with, and frequently above, expectations. In Year 7, students are starting to use appropriate terminology; they are developing manipulative skills, and are beginning to build up an understanding of the relationship between variables and values which underpin scientific investigations. By Year 9, the majority of students are describing their observations and recordings taken during practical work. Students in Years 10 and 11 confidently complete science investigations as part of their GCSE work. Students understand what is meant by a 'fair test' and are aware of the importance of considering the effect of a variety of possible variables when planning investigations. Throughout all year groups, students are starting to appreciate the rich history of scientific development. Written work shows good progress is being made across all year groups, although for some students work is sometimes incomplete and corrections are not always addressed. Students with learning difficulties, whilst making progress, sometimes struggle with work which is insufficiently differentiated to meet their needs. Similarly, the rate of progress of very able students is on occasions limited by the slower progress of other students within their teaching group. The relatively small number of students following the A/AS level separate science courses are all making good progress, although they have a wide range of ability and for some, attainment of higher grades at this level will be a challenge.

89. Almost all students in all year groups enjoy their work in science lessons, particularly practical work. Students are prepared to ask and answer questions and they adopt a very

sensible and safe approach when using apparatus. Students are prepared to work collaboratively to undertake investigations and to solve problems. In activities requiring students to discuss ideas, most are confident and are able to draw upon prior knowledge and experiences. A/AS students are starting to develop the skills of independent study.

90. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and is most often good or very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject; they use a range of questions to test students' understanding, and generally their expectations of their students are high. Practical investigations are well planned: students are encouraged to consider safety aspects of their investigations. Students' work is regularly assessed and formative comments in students' workbooks suggest areas for improvement. Teachers generally relate very well to their students, using a mixture of humour and praise to encourage them. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers make students aware of the requirements of the external examinations. In some lessons however, insufficient use is made of targeted questioning of individual students to challenge their understanding of the objectives of the lesson and to ensure that they remain actively involved in their work. Lessons in these cases tend to be insufficiently differentiated to match the varying attainment of the students. Teachers are confident with the requirements of the A/AS level syllabi and clearly enjoy teaching these students. In the majority of teaching groups at Key Stage 3 and 4, students are taught by at least two science teachers and some classes are split among three teachers. Continuity and consistency between teachers for these students is difficult and the arrangement is unsatisfactory. Timetable arrangements result in some teachers teaching their groups on alternate weeks. This arrangement makes continuity of learning difficult for students, particularly for the lower attaining groups. The time allocated to science in Key Stage 3 is adequate but in Key Stage 4 it falls short of national norms, particularly in Year 11. This is putting considerable pressure on both teachers and students to complete their modules before the final examination. The use of homework to reinforce understanding is good. Students are offered a very good range of extra curricular activities which includes a Saturday morning Science Club.

91. Following a lengthy period without a substantive head of faculty, the faculty is undergoing a period of transition with the recent appointment of a new head of faculty, who is already providing clear leadership and vision for the faculty. Much of the current documentation, including schemes of work, is due to be reviewed or is in the process of development. The faculty has yet to develop systems for monitoring lessons to ensure that planning takes into account the needs of individual students and groups and is informed by assessment of students' understanding and progress in each lesson. Whilst minimum target grades/levels are set for the achievement of students in external tests and examinations, the faculty should consider further refining the process to get beneath the numerical data. For example, teachers should ensure that each student knows what s/he should do to improve, and should review the current setting arrangements using available value added data in order to ensure that such arrangements are effective in optimising the progress of all students. The faculty benefits from very good accommodation which is well furnished and which provides excellent display areas for the promotion of science and of students' work. However, some of the faculty's resources are inadequate. Funding levels per student are at the lower end of the scale for this size and type of school. The faculty is in urgent need of replacement textbooks for all students, and would additionally benefit from the purchase of larger items of equipment such as low voltage units. Teachers are assisted by a team of laboratory technicians who are appropriately experienced and who contribute enormously to the work of the faculty. The lack of a designated Senior Technician, to organise the work loads of the other members of the team and to take responsibility for monitoring the use and replacement of resources, is putting an additional burden on the Head of Faculty.

ART AND DESIGN

92. Attainment throughout Key Stage 3 is above expectation. This confirms the school's own assessments of students' attainment in art at the end of Year 9. Both in 2000 and in recent years the percentage of students achieving *A to C grades in the GCSE art examination has been well above average. In the 2000 examination, boys did particularly well compared with the national average for boys.

93. The school has rapidly established a flourishing range of sixth form art courses. In 2000 the school entered students for A level art examinations for the first time and the percentage of higher grades gained was close to the national average. Currently, in the sixth form attainment is well above expectations, in both the A level and GNVQ courses.

94. There are many strengths of attainment in all key stages. Students work successfully in a wide range of materials, techniques and processes. They handle colour, tone, texture, pattern and shape well. Good skills in painting, collage, printing, photography and three-dimensional work are developed. A particular feature of almost all work is that it expresses individual students' own ideas, thoughts and feelings. This often results in richly subtle, complex, powerful and sometimes challenging imagery, a reflection of students' own responses in visual form. These qualities are abundant in students' portfolios and sketchbooks, and in the art on display in studios and around the school.

95. The influence of other artists and styles inspires the ideas and the visual quality of students' work. This aspect of art becomes a significant strength in the work of older students. However, background knowledge about artists and styles is a relatively weaker feature of attainment. While there are many examples of good quality drawing skills across all ages, there are some relative weaknesses in the skills of visual analysis that are needed to develop drawing more generally. Drawing skills in the sixth form are powerfully boosted by the provision of life drawing sessions. This is a significant factor in the generation of high quality sixth form work. Students of all abilities and backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, and those with particular artistic abilities, are able to achieve well in relation to their own ability levels.

96. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good, with some which is very good. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, teaching is very good, with some which is excellent. The quality of learning matches the quality of the teaching. At its best, the teaching provides inspiring and expert subject leadership, with students able to share the passion that teachers feel for art. In these lessons teachers and students generate a very strong atmosphere of endeavour, and enjoyment, and a commitment to success and quality. In particular, teachers ensure that all students clearly understand the aims of the lesson and know how to accomplish them. They organise equipment and materials so that work can proceed smoothly and productively. Most importantly, teachers know their students well and provide detailed individualised support which enables them to respond individually to the variety of projects and themes set. Students respond positively to art lessons and to the many extra-curricular opportunities provided. Behaviour is very good, students work hard, enjoy the challenge of high expectations and value the good working relationships they have with their art teachers.

97. Since the largely favourable 1995 inspection, the department has undergone many changes and improvements. Under very good subject leadership, a new scheme of work has been written that provides plenty of opportunities for students to develop their responses to a carefully considered sequence of art projects and that fulfils statutory requirements. Assessing attainment and tracking students' progress have improved. The quality of teaching and levels of attainment have risen. The department has successfully established sixth form courses, and good strategic planning has meant that the subject will soon enjoy the benefit of better studios. There is still work to do to fully exploit the artistic possibilities of information

and communication technology, and to widen the range of artistic styles and cultures used to inspire students own work and ideas.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

98. Teachers assessed students' standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 to be well above those found in schools nationally in 2000, and inspection confirmed that this is still the case. The strengths of the work in Key Stage 3 lie in the high quality of products that students make, and in the outstanding practical skills which they develop, enabling them to make products of high quality. They select and use a range of tools and equipment confidently to help them complete tasks with accuracy. They work with precision in cutting, shaping and joining materials. Students understand how to generate and develop design ideas and on the whole carry out these processes well. However, the design work of higher attainers does not show the breadth and depth of research and development which will take them to the highest levels of performance. As a consequence, teacher assessments showed few students achieving National Curriculum Level 7 and no Level 8 or exceptional performance in 2000. Nonetheless, students make good progress across Key Stage 3 and achieve well.

99. GCSE results were well above average in 2000 on all measures of performance. An exceptionally high proportion of the cohort was entered for the GCSE exams. Students performed very strongly in design and technology when compared with other subjects in the school. Boys did particularly well: all passed, and a higher proportion of boys than girls scored A* grades. Overall results have improved strongly since 1995 even though they were already well above average at the time of the last inspection. GCSE results are very good in all media - food, resistant materials and textiles and represent very good achievements for the students concerned. GNVQ Part One Engineering results at intermediate level are also strong, with a very high pass rate and very good achievement at distinction level.

100. In lessons and work seen, standards across Years 10 and 11 are well above average. The practical strengths already noted at Key Stage 3 are improved still further, so that products are made to exceptionally high standards and have a genuinely professional quality. Students' understanding of materials and processes are good, and they use this to help them to develop products effectively and make improvements as work progresses. Some students produce outstanding design portfolios; most students' design work is good but it is still not as strong as their practical work. GNVQ engineering students develop very accurate technical drawing skills, with some exceptionally good work using computer-aided design. Students of all levels of attainment achieve very well at Key Stage 4.

101. The teaching is very good. All lessons seen during the inspection were good or better, most were very good and, at Key Stage 4, two-thirds were excellent. There are many strengths to the teaching. A particular feature is the high expectation teachers have of students' practical capabilities. Teachers instil a positive "can-do" approach; few problems are allowed to seem insurmountable because of the technology available to students and the skills which they are taught. This is re-inforced by planning which incorporates extensive links with local industry and references to industrial practices, helping students understand how design and manufacturing problems are resolved by professionals. Teachers use resources exceptionally well. They prepare and use a large number of high-quality exemplar products and make very good use of previous work by students to motivate and inspire others. The incorporation of computer-aided design and manufacture has significantly improved the quality of some aspects of work, and leaves some students with a certain awe at what they can achieve, especially in engineering drawing. More traditional technology, such as the use of lathes and metalworking equipment, help to produce exciting products of which students can be proud. Teachers have created stimulating learning environments in the technology rooms, with high quality display of students' work and helpful information. As a

result students learn very well in this subject. In most classes, they are highly motivated, and the technology block is alive with students doing additional work and activities outside normal lesson time. The level of practical skill which students acquire means that they are become good independent workers, and show initiative and perseverance: teachers rarely have queues of students seeking attention and help. Students with special educational needs learn very well, too; teachers are aware of these students' needs and offer them appropriate help. However, teachers are not sufficiently discriminating when planning lessons for pupils of very different abilities in Key Stage 3. The consequences are that some lower attainers fall behind (with elements of portfolios incomplete) and have to work very hard to keep up, while higher attainers do not extend the quality of their design work sufficiently.

102. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The department has made excellent progress in its efforts to raise standards and has been well supported by the active involvement of the whole teaching team and link representatives of the school's leadership team and governing body. Much work has been done since the last inspection to develop a GNVQ engineering course which is well suited to students' needs and provides them with high-quality industrial experiences. The curriculum complies fully with requirements. Teachers make full use of the very good resources available to them, and they work hard to raise additional funding through sponsorship. Accommodation for the subject is generally very good, but the graphics room is very cramped and contributes to the lack of graphics as a GCSE subject.

GEOGRAPHY

103. In the year 2000 GCSE examination, the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C was above the national average, with over two-thirds of candidates achieving these grades. The average point score was also above the national average. Geography results are above the average of other subjects. The results have fluctuated over the past four years but show a general upward trend. The achievement of boys is significantly higher than that of girls. This is a result of the department's effort to attract boys to the subject through the programme of fieldwork on offer. The results achieved by the first A level group were well below the national average due partly to the policy of open access to ensure equality of opportunity for all students.

104. The standard of work seen, for students at the age of fourteen, is above the level expected nationally. Students know that maps are essential in the study of geography and can give accurate six figure grid references for a specific location. They can draw maps accurately to scale, as demonstrated in the work on a treasure island, and know the meaning of symbols on Ordnance Survey maps. They understand some of the reasons why settlement patterns change with time when they investigate the developments in Christchurch and Bournemouth, including the retail park development. They appreciate the need to reconcile human activities with the environment in their study of natural hazards as for example the volcanic eruptions on the island of Montserrat, and the Kobe earthquake in Japan, demonstrating how each factor impacts on others. They extend their knowledge of a wide range of geographical topics including plate tectonics, rural/urban migration, ecosystems, tourism and economic development issues in Kenya. They make very good use of information and communication technology and competently access information, and present statistical data to enhance their learning in geography. By the end of Key Stage 3 they have acquired a good foundation in the subject in order to proceed to the next stage of learning.

105. Students build on this good foundation in Key Stage 4, and by the end of Year 11 they have a good grasp of the complex relationship between the natural environment and human activity. For example, they apply cost-benefit analysis to the problem of global warming and

the greenhouse effect and show appreciation of the difficulties facing less-economically-developed countries to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels. The students apply relevant skills successfully to investigate urban land use, the central business district, the green belt and new towns and show a good understanding of models such as Burgess' concentric rings and Hoyt's sector theory of urban growth. In their study of economic development in Kenya they show a clear understanding of the concepts of appropriate technology and sustained development and understand the issues facing charitable organisations which provide development aid. They simulate good decision making exercises when they provide reasoned arguments to convince aid agencies of the need to support their suggested projects. Their fieldwork experience in Snowdonia helps them to appreciate more fully the aesthetic value of the physical landscape.

106. As part of their A level course, students undertake studies of aspects of the world of work, such as the management of natural hazards and flood control schemes on the Mississippi River, and show a good understanding of a range of opinions over the costs and benefits involved, and their links to vested interests. They make valuable comparisons with local schemes when they investigate flood control measures at Iford Bridge on the Stour. They successfully use statistical techniques such as Spearman's rank correlation coefficient to test hypotheses when examining the relation between the size of a river basin and the discharge rate - information needed in the prediction of flooding. They use information technology successfully to make presentations to a variety of audiences, including work on display in the department. They gain experience in planning investigations and analysing statistics when examining urban changes in Cambridge, in contrast to the Isle of Purbeck's rural environment and offer suggestions for regeneration.

107. Students make good progress from average attainment at entry to above the national expectation, by the age of fourteen. They make good progress throughout their time in school and achieve standards above national averages. Students with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the support given in their geography lessons, contributing to the good standard of their achievement. In the work seen there was no significant difference in the rate of progress between boys and girls although previous examination results show higher attainments of boys.

108. The quality of teaching is very good overall with some examples of excellent teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Where teaching is good or better, teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge so that students receive accurate information, understand the principles involved and acquire new skills. The teaching of basic skills is good and students recognise the need for accurate use of scales, a key and other features of mapwork. They understand how to interpret landscape features by analysing contour lines, and can give accurate six-figure grid references for locations. Good teaching in the department is also characterised by enthusiastic delivery which stimulates the interest of the students and motivates them to make good intellectual efforts to solve problems. However there are some occasions when opportunities are missed to challenge students to think for themselves. The management of students is very good and is a strength of the department and the relationship between staff and students is very good. This good relationship, including a sense of humour, is conducive to effective learning and students generally work at a good pace and do not waste time. Homework is very well used in the department to reinforce learning and students are positive in their attitude to completing the work given.

109. Leadership and management in the department are very good and there is a shared commitment to raising standards. There is a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject, by staff and students alike, and this contributes to a good learning environment enhanced by colourful displays reflecting the range of topics studied. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching by

lesson observations, planning and regular discussions between staff ensure that good practice is disseminated. Very good use is made of information technology to enhance teaching and learning. Fieldwork provision is excellent, is a strength of the department and contributes to the popularity of the subject and its success in attracting boys to select it as an option. The profile of the subject in the school is high. The curriculum on offer is broad and balanced, with a range of both physical and human geography topics and residential fieldwork and complies fully with the requirements of the National Curriculum. Resources are good with good provision of maps, textbooks and audio-visual aids.

110. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. GCSE results have improved significantly over the period. The quantity and range of fieldwork opportunities are excellent and this contributes to the popularity of the subject, which achieves the highest recruitment within the options available and contributes to the reversal of the national pattern of boys' underachievement compared to that of girls. Resources have increased and schemes of work have been updated to satisfy the requirements of Curriculum 2000. The very good systematic use of information technology by students enhances their learning. Areas for continued improvement include making greater use of differentiation to cater for the broadening ability range in Key Stage 3; refining the tracking system across key stages; both of which are already recognised in the departmental plans, and improving standards of achievement at A/AS level.

HISTORY

111. A level examination results in 2000, the first year of entry, were below the national average and disappointing in relation to the students' ability. However the standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are much higher, and are likely to produce good results. Students at both A and AS level are making good progress in their learning. They show a good grasp of the factual content of their courses and are able to deploy this knowledge to give possible explanations of historical events such as Kirov's assassination, and to evaluate interpretations of history such as the structuralist versus intentionalist explanations of Hitler's actions.

112. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion achieving A*-C grades was just below the national average and also below attainment in other subjects in the school. Attainment at the highest grades and the attainment of boys were both well below the national average. This forms part of a trend of decline over the past three years caused by staffing changes and difficulties. However, these problems have been successfully resolved and lesson observation and the scrutiny of students' work indicate that standards in the current Years 10 and 11 are now well above national expectations. This is the result of teaching that is well focussed on the key historical issues of the syllabuses, together with the strong commitment of students and the very good leadership of the department. At Key Stage 4 students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress. What students do well is to communicate their historical ideas orally and in writing when answering questions such as how the Vietnam War affected both Vietnam and the USA. They all show good factual knowledge and understanding and the higher attainers show good source handling skills. What lower attaining students find most difficult is to apply what they know to the question asked.

113. By the end of Key Stage 3 most older students are on target to achieve standards above those expected nationally. Given the students' attainment on entry, this represents good progress. In Key Stage 3 all students are making good progress and the progress of students with special educational needs is helped by their being asked the same historical questions as everyone else, but given appropriate help. The majority of students produce very good extended writing in answer to questions dealing with the cause of the English Civil

War. Students show good factual knowledge and understanding and can give accurate descriptions of features of past societies, such as how medieval society was affected by the Black Death. Their enquiry skills are also good.

114. The department has made very good progress in the past year. Standards at A level and at GCSE have improved, and the numbers of students opting for history have started to rise. Numbers at AS level have tripled and numbers at GCSE have doubled at a time when it is no longer compulsory for students to choose an humanities option. Schemes of work at all levels have been revised to make learning objectives explicit, and the new AS and GCSE courses have been successfully introduced. There is now an excellent assessment procedure in operation at Key Stage 3. Students are very clear about what their level of achievement is and how they can improve. Problems of access have hampered progress in developing the use of information technology at Key Stage 3 and there is a clear need to develop the local history dimension.

115. The quality of teaching in history is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at GCSE and A and AS level. There are a number of strong features of the best teaching. In all lessons relationships between teachers and students are very good. This creates an atmosphere in which learning is valued and students clearly enjoy history. Many students in all groups are keen to respond to teacher questioning. In a Year 9 lesson the teacher set up a role play where groups of students took on the role of European countries in the period leading up to 1939. Groups were cleverly organised to match the level of difficulty of the task to the ability of the students. So for example the lowest attainers, with the help of a Learning Support Assistant, were given the role of Belgium. Using excellent classroom management skills and probing questioning, the teacher controlled the enthusiasm of students and kept the focus on the history. By the end of the lesson all students, including those with special educational needs, had contributed well to whole class discussion and all had reached a sympathetic understanding of why the countries had followed a policy of appeasement. Teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. In a Year 13 lesson students had to decide if Stalin had plotted Kirov's assassination. The teacher had provided a very good set of resources and imposed a time limit that challenged the students to reach a supported conclusion, a challenge that they met. Success of the lesson was founded on the teachers' very good knowledge of the period. Teachers' planning is also a very positive feature. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher modelled the historian's skills for using cartoons about Nazi Germany. Students, in pairs, then applied these skills to a set of cartoons and in the final feedback session showed that they had fully understood this difficult skill. They were then set an examination question on a cartoon to complete for homework that would reinforce their learning and also allow the teacher to check it.

116. History is very well led and managed and there is a strong commitment to improve in the department. This lies behind the improvement in standards and the much higher profile of history in the school. Whilst resources are adequate for the existing numbers studying history they will be inadequate for the increased numbers opting for the subject. The curriculum complies with statutory requirements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

117. In the 1995 inspection, standards in information technology were very good at all levels. However, the computing facilities were old and the software range was barely adequate. Faculties found access to IT facilities difficult and some subjects were underdeveloped in their use of information technology.

118. Since then, there has been a good improvement, particularly in the network of computers available for students to use both within IT lessons and across the curriculum.

The ratio of students to computers is now 4:1 which is much better than the national average. The curriculum complies in full with the requirements of the National Curriculum.

119. Achievement at the end of each key stage is above average. Key Stage 3 teacher assessment in 2000 show that eighty seven per cent of students are at Level 5 and above. This is above the national average. At the end of Key Stage 4 GCSE course results in 2000 were very good with sixty eight per cent of students achieving grade C or higher. This is well above the national average. Advanced GNVQ (AVCE) students in 2000 all achieved passes with merit or distinction. Value added scores for these students are particularly good.

120. Students were seen to use a wide variety of software. CD ROMs are available on the network. Students use the Internet to good effect and teachers are able to send homework and worksheets to students using e-mail.

121. Standards reached in lessons observed in information technology show that by the end of Key Stage 3 most students are achieving Levels 6-8, which is above the national average. All students are able to log on and retrieve saved files with confidence. Students in Year 7 are producing outstanding work, building web pages and PowerPoint presentations.

122. By the end of Key Stage 4, students have shown that they are able to use the information and communication technology facilities with confidence, particularly where they have well defined assignments to follow. Standards observed in lessons ranged from good to excellent.

123. Students in the advanced GNVQ course are achieving very high standards. They are able to write complex programs in VBA and html and run macros in Excel. Their understanding of program structure and design is very good. Presentations made by these students, some of them using Powerpoint and their own web pages, were of an excellent standard.

124. Students use computers with enthusiasm and skill. Behaviour is generally very good. Where there is a background of quiet chatter it is generally constructive.

125. Teachers find many ways to encourage all students to use computers, such as clubs and an open-access policy. The Intranet is a very useful resource, enabling teachers and students to access programs and files through a user-friendly interface designed by the network manager.

126. Students with special needs gain particular benefit from using information and communication technology; several of them use spell checking as a matter of course. Support staff are very effective within information and communication technology lessons.

127. Throughout all the information and communication technology lessons observed, teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent and is very good overall. Teachers have good control of students, inspiring keenness and interest in information and communication technology. The business studies lesson observed was excellent - the teacher inspired the class to very high levels of attainment.

128. The popularity of information and communication technology is growing, with nearly half of students choosing to study GCSE level in the subject. Advanced GNVQ Information Technology is popular in the sixth form. All students from Year 10 upwards who are not following an examination course study Key Skills information and communication technology. Excellent schemes of work have been produced for the cross-curricular information and communication technology lessons at Key Stage 3. Non-specialist teachers are given clear

guidelines on assessment criteria and, as a result, the faculty is able to plan and respond to the needs of the students.

129. The faculty is well run with good leadership and direction providing a good forward-looking direction. There is strength in depth within the faculty with major contributions being made by the network manager, Key Stage 3 information and communication technology co-ordinator and assistant headteacher. This is a very good faculty with many excellent features, and one which has made very good improvements since the last inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

130. Since the last inspection, GCSE results have fluctuated with a decline in recent years to slightly below national average standards.

131. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with the National Curriculum expectations. In Years 7 and 8 however, many students are performing above the national expectations and, in one Year 7 lesson observed students' performance easily exceeded national expectations for this age group. In Key Stage 4, students' work is at least in line with the requirements of the examination courses. Many have developed a feel for French or German, and speak and experiment with the language with confidence. There are, nevertheless, significant numbers of students whose active language skills of speaking and writing in the target language do not fully match their passive skills of listening and reading.

132. Students' attitudes to languages and their associated cultures are generally very positive in both key stages. They consistently stay on task, take care of their work, participate in class activities willingly, and have very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. Very few students show persistent disengagement or express negative feelings about the subject. However, in some lessons significant numbers of students tolerate the subject rather than showing enthusiasm, interest and commitment towards it.

133. In Key Stage 3, students are developing a feel for their chosen modern languages; they understand a range of familiar, simple questions and commands and usually follow classroom instructions in the target language. Students conduct short dialogues with their teachers and with each other; they repeat words and phrases with reasonable accuracy; and generally show an enjoyment for their subject. Most students can respond to short simple questions in the target language, with some attempting fluency and accuracy in their pronunciation. Their writing is developing well, with most students undertaking sustained and consistent writing tasks in the language of their choice. Many students are steadily acquiring skills to learn a modern language, either independently or with other students in the class. In Key Stage 4, students are working to the requirements of the examining bodies. Their written work is substantial, demonstrating considerable effort and progress. Their written work shows evidence of homework based on relevant tasks involving short texts and dialogues in the languages they study. Many have developed independent language learning skills, using dictionaries, audio and visual materials, and other extra reading and listening materials. As observed in some Year 11 lessons, the more able GCSE students show marked skills for language learning. They take ownership of their work and produce consistent and substantial written and oral work to meet the course requirements. Their speaking and responding in the target language is becoming confident. Overall, however, speaking in French with fluency and confidence still remains a challenge for many students in both key stages.

134. Teaching in modern languages is good in both key stages, with committed and qualified teachers who are supported beneficially by a language assistant. Teachers employ a variety of activities and techniques well to motivate all students and to raise their commitment to language learning. Teachers strive to challenge all students to their best

performance in all aspects of language learning reading, writing, speaking and listening. Classroom management is generally conducive to language learning. Assessment, record keeping and monitoring of students' performance are consistently very good and are used to improve teaching and learning. Teachers include a range of tasks and activities to promote independent language learning skills. Information and communication technology, though still limited, is used to good effect. All teachers see homework as a vital part of the overall teaching-learning strategy.

135. Teaching focuses on the learning and progression needs of identifiable groups of students, such as those with special educational needs, the more able, and those who need sustained support. Clarity of learning targets for specific groups of students, combined with setting and the inclusion of Certificate of Achievement for some students, leads to a good rate of achievement for most students. Teachers' expectations, which are often high, and their consistent use of the target language, create a challenging ethos of language acquisition for most students in both key stages. The three teachers who are native French speakers and the French Language Assistant maintain an ethos of enthusiasm and authenticity for this subject in the school. These valuable strengths of teaching in French also account largely for the minimal amount of apathy observed in lessons.

136. The modern languages curriculum offers equality of opportunity to all students and fulfils statutory requirements. It also recognises the needs of the more able linguists by offering them an additional language, German from Year 9. Through setting, the faculty seeks to meet the wide range of learning needs of all students. In addition to GCSE, the Certificate of Achievement extends French to a wider range of abilities and aptitudes. A good example of this was observed in a Year 10 lesson in which all students were combining a good deal of enjoyment in French with significant progress in language acquisition. The faculty, through its policies and teaching practice, includes students with special educational needs in mainstream language provision. The current 'Talk' Project has led to noticeable improvement in students' active language skills in both key stages, and has increased the enjoyment and confidence they get when speaking French.

137. The management of the faculty is very effective. The faculty's capacity for self review is impressive and the significant steps it has taken to improve the quality of modern language provision for all students fully justify its confidence that they will bear fruit in the coming years. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved considerably. However, problems relating to accommodation still persist: modern language teaching resources are scattered across the school. Also, the issues around the curriculum time in Key Stage 3 for dual linguists as well as potential dual linguists have not yet been addressed. The faculty is aware that it has not yet exploited the full potential of ICT in modern language teaching and learning.

MUSIC

138. At the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of students is above that expected of those of a similar age. Teacher assessments also indicate that almost all students are working at levels above the national expectation. At Key Stage 4, standards are above those expected of students of a similar age and from similar schools. GCSE results for 2000 indicate that two thirds of students achieved A*-C grades, a figure above the national average. This is broadly in line with results from previous years. A level results for 2000 confirm that students achieve results in line with the national average. Standards in instrumental lessons are above those expected of students of a similar age. Very high standards are achieved in the good range of extra-curricular activities – choirs, orchestras and other ensembles.

139. At Key Stage 3, students demonstrate good knowledge of musical terms and styles, which they are able to apply in practical activities. They perform well, for example in a Year 9 whole class performance of the Pachelbel Canon, and their improvising and composing skills are developing effectively, as with a Year 7 class' performance of an Indian Raga. Musical skills also develop very effectively at Key Stage 4, where students in Year 10 apply their knowledge and understanding of the music of other cultures in a World Music Project, and in Year 11 where students discuss and talk knowledgeably about particular features of the classical period. They perform and compose in a variety of styles, for example in Year 11 where a student had developed a well-structured minimalist composition. Students develop all-round musical skills at advanced level. In Year 13, listening and analytical skills were effectively developed through discussion of Mahler Lieder, and performances in rehearsal for an A level concert demonstrated the high standards of achievement of some students.

140. Teaching in the department is very good and strongly promotes students' learning. Strengths in teaching are teachers' very good subject knowledge, planning with clear aims and objectives, the challenge of work set, the high expectations of students and the variety of teaching strategies employed to support and enhance learning. With such imaginative teaching, students are able to consolidate and develop musical skills well. They work at a good pace, regularly applying intellectual and creative skills and demonstrating a clear understanding of what they are doing and how they can improve their work. Students enjoy music and are fully involved in their work, in which they engage with high levels of concentration. Behaviour is almost always exemplary and relationships are very good.

141. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a clear vision of and a shared commitment to the subject by all music staff, including visiting instrumental teachers. Departmental documentation, which includes detailed planning and assessment procedures, is very good and ensures that the curriculum complies with statutory requirements. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. There has been a significant increase in the number of students receiving instrumental lessons and taking part in the impressive range of extra-curricular activities, and in the resources to support the range of music ability across the key stages. Provision of ICT has improved and is used effectively at Key Stage 4 and post-16. However, less use is made of ICT at Key Stage 3 and this, together with more effective moderation of the practice of assessment at Key Stage 3, represents areas of development for this otherwise vibrant department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

142. Results in the GCSE examination have improved well since the last inspection, the percentage of students obtaining higher grades increased from forty six per cent to sixty two per cent. All students entered for the examination in 2000 obtained a pass grade, and the results were above the national average. The students respond very well to the demands of the course and make very good progress. The school entered its first group of students for the A level examination in 2000; nine of the ten students entered were successful, representing good achievement and progress.

143. In 2000, the teachers' assessment of the students' work at the end of Key Stage 3 showed attainment to be broadly in line with that expected of students of this age. Since 1997 standards of attainment have improved and, in 2000, just over one in five students aged fourteen reached a standard beyond that expected for their age. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys.

144. In the lessons seen, the attainment of the students aged between eleven and fourteen was at least in line with the national expectation and in some lessons was beyond it. For example, girls in a Year 7 netball lesson had a good knowledge of how to use exercise

productively. They passed, caught and moved with accuracy and good judgement. They quickly developed an understanding of dodging and evading the player marking them and applied these skills well in a game, allowing fluent passages of play. Boys in a Year 9 hockey lesson demonstrated a good range of skills. Many were able to adjust the weight of the pass, stop the ball on both the forward and reverse stick and adjust their footwork to cross the ball accurately. There were examples of very high-quality work in a Year 8 boys' gymnastics lesson, in which higher-attaining students devised an imaginative sequence of varied and complex balances whilst paying very good attention to the quality of their performance. For students in Key Stage 4 attainment is consistently in line with the standards expected for students of this age. This is because the teachers have consistently high expectations, plan lessons that meet the needs and abilities of the students and ensure that students enjoy the lessons. In all activities there was evidence of individual students performing at levels beyond those expected for their age. Teachers make good use of students to demonstrate to others in the group how they can improve their personal performance in trampolining, hockey and badminton. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, students of all abilities achieve well, make good progress and accomplish tasks and skills of which they can be justifiably proud.

145. However, these standards could be even better. The inadequate indoor and outdoor accommodation and facilities are restricting the learning opportunities of students. The dimensions of the school hall hinder work in trampolining and badminton. Students enter the school with good standards in swimming. The school ensures that they continue to make sound progress but evidence from this inspection has highlighted the restrictions that the small size of the pool and the large size of some teaching groups place on the students and the teaching staff. Given the serious and longstanding flooding of a third of the school playing fields, seen during the inspection, the lack of sufficient all-weather surfaces is limiting the development of skills in hockey and football.

146. Attainment in the theoretical aspects of the A/AS level course is in line with the expectations of the course in Year 13. Students give well-reasoned answers using a good range of background knowledge to support their views. Students in Year 12 find the linking of theory to practical outcomes difficult. They have a good range of practical skills that enhance their personal performance. Improvements are needed in the range of questions asked by the teacher to encourage students to extend and expand on their ideas and answers.

147. Throughout the school, students work hard to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result they make steady progress and achieve well. The high standards of behaviour and very positive attitudes are the result of productive relationships between the students themselves and between the students and their teachers. Students can be relied upon to accept responsibility and give of their best, despite the difficulties posed by using non-specialist accommodation for badminton and trampolining. Larger-than-average group sizes using the swimming pool limit the students' ability to listen and, by placing an unnecessary demand upon the teacher, makes teaching and learning less effective. Students with special educational needs make good progress; their needs are recognised by the teacher and there is good communication with learning support assistants.

148. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good for students aged fourteen to sixteen. It makes a significant impact on students' learning, the progress they make and the standards they attain. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during this inspection. All teachers have very good subject knowledge. They use their coaching skills to very good effect, have high expectations, manage the students very well and use effective teaching methods and assessment in well-planned lessons that provide suitable challenges and make the students think. Good use is made of questioning, demonstration by students and well-timed interventions improve the students' success rate. Teachers recognise and value the effort that the students put into their work. Some lessons would benefit from more specific

learning objectives, planning that gives greater attention to differentiation and questioning that is better matched to the spread of ability in the group. The quality of learning is good overall. There are occasions at Key Stage 4 when, despite very good teaching, the edge is taken off the students' learning because they fail to take full benefit of the advice they are given to improve their skills and personal performance.

149. Very good leadership and management have enabled good improvement to be made since the last inspection. The team of well-qualified and talented teachers works well together. The department has a good understanding of both its strengths and areas for development. There is a shared commitment to raising standards further and to overcoming the problems that the accommodation poses to teaching and learning. The curriculum has good breadth and balance, provides students with a good range of learning opportunities and meets statutory requirements in full. The high profile of the subject is seen in the range and quality of extra-curricular activities, the success of teams representing the school and the good links that have been established with the wider sporting community and local primary schools.

150. In order to raise standards still further, the PE department needs to give attention to developing the use of information and communication technology as an aid to learning; to making clear the links between assessment and the curriculum and to creating a database of assessment information that will allow the department to identify trends in attainment and any underachievement by groups of students in specific activities. It would also help the department to ensure that lesson plans identify clear learning objectives and give sufficient attention to planning for the needs of students of differing ability.

151. With the support of the Local Education Authority, urgent action should be taken to upgrade the facilities for PE and to improve the quality of the accommodation which is inadequate to meet the demands of the curriculum, impedes the quality of learning in too many activities and places unnecessary demands upon the teachers in terms of organisation, health and safety.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

152. The standards being achieved towards the end of Key Stage 3 are above the expectations of Dorset's Agreed Syllabus for RE. Results at GCSE for both the full and the short course are average, as are those for A level. The performance of students currently in Years 11 and 13 indicate a likely improvement in standards in the future. The standards achieved by students following RE modules as part of their General Studies programme and through the termly RE days are good.

153. Students' make progress and achieve well at both key stages and in the sixth form. Their knowledge and understanding are good and are used increasingly effectively to provide descriptions and explanations, to compare beliefs and practices, and to make links between faith and lifestyle. During the inspection, students in Year 9 considered what influences people in making their moral decisions. They learned about what might influence Christians in their decision-making and considered aspects of Jesus' teaching that they personally found most challenging. They related this well to previous learning about the teachings of the Buddha. Students are able to present their own views confidently, give reasons for their opinions and listen respectfully to other people's views. They are increasingly able to analyse and empathise with the role of religion in the world today. In Year 13 for example, students confidently apply different ethical theories to contemporary issues such as abortion and euthanasia. They are able to consider how pupils' religious faith might affect their views on such issues and to analyse their own responses to ethical and religious teachings.

154. Higher-attaining students and those with special educational needs make good progress because teachers take account of their needs when planning lessons. Recent work to match assessment levels with the steps in learning outlined in the Agreed Syllabus has helped teachers meet the needs of different ability groups within a class.

155. Students respond well to appropriately high levels of challenge. For example, students in Year 10 worked hard to produce group presentations on aspects of Sikh festivals, researching thoroughly and developing some interesting and factually accurate and detailed presentations, including one using Powerpoint and another developing a website to contain the information. The quality and detail of sixth form files for examination work is impressive and indicates real commitment to the subject. Students take opportunities for research work seriously and readily share their findings with the rest of the class. There is very little unfinished work in books and homework is completed well and is often detailed. Presentation is good and group work and discussion completed with enthusiasm. All this shows that students' attitudes to religious education are very positive. Good relationships and behaviour contribute strongly to students' positive attitudes to learning RE.

156. Teaching is good. In the lessons seen during the inspection teaching was never less than satisfactory and it was usually good. Teachers of RE are well qualified, hard working and have a real commitment to the subject and to their students. Students in Year 7 are taught RE as part of a humanities course by staff who are not necessarily RE specialists. It was not possible during the inspection to see any RE being taught in Year 7. The impact of these arrangements should be kept under review.

157. Teachers have high expectations which result in students making good intellectual effort in their work. For example, in Year 8 students use the internet to find relevant newspaper articles about human rights from which they extract information relevant for their own presentations. In Year 12, when watching a video outlining scientific and religious views about creation they summarise accurately, identify information and ideas that are new to them and relate other propositional and non-propositional viewpoints to the material.

158. Teachers question well to check knowledge, extend understanding and encourage participation. Many questions are open-ended and encourage students to give reasons for what they have said. Methods are well chosen to provide variety of experience and to engage students. Whole-class, small group and paired discussion as well as individual research and written work and the use of games, drama and presentations are amongst the range of activities planned to promote students' learning. Homework is used well.

159. The department's scheme of work is detailed and is in line with the revised Agreed Syllabus; it provides a firm foundation for lesson planning. The sixth form have an RE day once per term and also cover some RE focused modules within the General Studies programme. The A/AS level course in Religious Studies enhances provision further. The RE curriculum complies with legal requirements.

160. The development of literacy is well supported by the written and oral work engaged in and by the correct use of religious terminology. There are planned opportunities within the curriculum for the use of the internet, CD ROM and word processing to aid learning in RE and develop skills in using information and communications technology.

161. Students are keen to do well. Most understand how well they are achieving especially in examination groups in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Students are less clear about how well they are doing in Key Stage 3 where attainment levels linked to the learning steps of the Agreed Syllabus have only recently been introduced.

162. The RE department makes a strong contribution to the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students. It does this through the content of the subject but also through the way in which lessons are taught. Students are encouraged to think for themselves, share ideas, and learn from the teachings and practices of different religions by reflecting on the significance of them for believers. They are encouraged to respect the beliefs and feelings of other people.

163. The department is very well managed and led. The head of department and her team are committed to encouraging a high profile for RE and improving standards of attainment further. The team works purposefully together and their work is monitored well. The plan to appoint a Key Stage 3 co-ordinator for RE to bring it into line with other subjects in the school is to be welcomed as a means of providing further stimulus for development. There is a satisfactory range of basic resources although there is a need for more textbooks in Key Stage 3 and for examination groups in the sixth form. Library resources are not sufficient to meet the needs of students, especially those studying at examination level. Accommodation is well used and the specialist RE rooms providing an interesting environment in which to learn. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection, particularly with regard to the introduction of the GCSE short course in Key Stage 4 and increasing the numbers of students opting to take the GCSE full course.