

INSPECTION REPORT

Sir William Romney's School Tetbury

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique Reference Number: 115779

Inspection Number: 184948

Headteacher: Eric Dawson

Reporting inspector: W S Walton

Dates of inspection: 15 – 19 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708122

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

Type of control: Foundation

Age range of students: 11 - 18

Gender of students: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A Hicks

Date of previous inspection: May 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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W S Walton, RgI	Special educational needs (SEN)	Attainment and progress Attitudes and behaviour Teaching Leadership and management Efficiency Attendance Welfare and guidance Partnership
M Hackney, Lay Inspector		
D Klemm	Equal opportunities	
D M Green	English	Post 16
J Seed	Mathematics	Key Stage 4
P Sellwood	Science	
	Design and technology (DT)	
	Information technology (ICT)	
	Art	
J Webster	Geography	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
D Harris	Modern foreign languages	Resources
A Lees	Music	
	Drama	
P Wall	Physical education (PE)	
H Turton	History	Curriculum and assessment
	Religious education (RE)	

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MAIN FINDINGS

1 What the school does well

- Students make good progress and achieve good standards of attainment in national examinations.
- The proportions of good and very good teaching are very high.
- Standards of behaviour and the quality of relationships are very good.
- Students have very good attitudes towards work and become mature, independent learners.
- Leadership is very effective and the school gives very good value for money.
- Arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students are very good.
- Provision for academic and pastoral support is very good.
- There is a very strong programme of extra-curricular activities.
- It has a very effective partnership with its community.

2 Where the school has weaknesses

- I. It does not fulfil the national requirement for the teaching of DT at Key Stage 4.
- II. The time allowed for GNVQ is below national recommendations.
- III. The organisation of the timetable does not always provide the best conditions for good learning.

This is a very good school with very many strengths and few weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of students at the school.

3 How the school has improved since the last inspection

Standards and the quality of provision have improved very significantly. Standards of attainment have been maintained in all subjects and improved in many of them. Standards of attainment of Post 16 students are much better. The proportions of good and very good teaching are much higher. Leadership and management are much more effective, lines of communication are clear and developmental planning is much stronger. Staff development arrangements are very good. There is a comprehensive curriculum policy and the timetable structure has been reviewed although not all problems have been resolved. Provision for RE fully meets statutory requirements at Key Stages 3 and 4 and is moving towards that standard at Post 16. The school continues not to meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. The governors' annual report to parents is now in line with statutory requirements. Substantial improvements have been made to the accommodation and the school is much better resourced, especially in ICT. The cost effectiveness of the Post 16 provision has improved considerably. The school has the policies and systems in place to continue to improve standards.

4 Standards in subjects

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

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

Over the three years 1996 – 1998 average scores in Key Stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science respectively have been close to national averages. The average score in Key Stage 3 in 1998 was below that of schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals. In the 1999 tests standards were much better than national averages in mathematics and science and better than those of similar schools. The 1999 test papers in English are being remarked. Over the years 1996 – 1998 the proportion of students obtaining 5 or more passes at grades A*-C in GCSE was better than national averages. In 1998 the average points score per student in GCSE was better than the national average and in line with that of similar schools. Students with SEN make good progress and achieve much success in GCSE. The average score per student at A Level has been close to the national average in recent years. In 1998 it was much better than the national average. In line with the national picture girls have done significantly better than boys in GCSE.

5 Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Drama, geography, art	-----
Years 10-11	Good	Mathematics, ICT, geography, art, music, drama	-----
Years 12-13	Good	Media studies, English, science, German, geography, art, RE, PE	-----
English	Good	-----	-----
Mathematics	Good	-----	-----

The quality of teaching is a major strength. The quality of relationships between teachers and students is excellent. There is an unusually high proportion of good and very good teaching and unsatisfactory teaching is rare.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor;

very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses

6 Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good in classes, around school and off site. Employers with students on work placements speak highly of the way students conduct themselves. Students show respect for people and property. They mature markedly as they progress through the school.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are better than national averages. Levels of unauthorised absence are much lower than found in most schools.
Ethos*	A positive, caring atmosphere in which students feel valued. There is the expectation that all will work hard.
Leadership and management	Open and effective with clear sense of direction. Very good co-operation between management and governors.
Curriculum	Broad and balanced except that not all students study DT at Key Stage 4. Some of the timetabling does not provide for very effective learning. Insufficient time for GNVQ. Very good careers programme. Very good provision for extra-curricular activities. Good arrangements for assessment of progress.
Students with special educational needs	Make good progress socially and academically. Fully integrated into the school and well supported.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very strong provision for all these aspects of personal development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Very good, well kept accommodation. Effective use of resources, especially the library and ICT. Effective deployment of staff.
Value for money	Very good value. Very efficient use of resources and good outcomes in attainment and personal development.

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

7 The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

- IV. It enables students to achieve good standards of work
- V. Its values and attitudes have a positive effect on students
- VI. Students like the school
- VII. It encourages students to become involved in more than just daily lessons
- VIII. It is easy to approach with problems
- IX. It encourages parents to play an active part in its life
- X. Students receive good help and guidance
- XI. The transition from primary education is very well handled

What some parents are not happy about

- XII. Homework
- XIII. Standards in mathematics

The great majority of parents who completed questionnaires and those who attended the meeting with the registered inspector were very positive about the school. The evidence found by inspectors supports their views. Inspectors found that homework is set and marked regularly. Tasks set are worthwhile and used to consolidate and extend classroom learning. It makes reasonable demands on students. The school is aware of concerns about mathematics. This area of work has been and continues to be subject to review. Standards in national curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved. Curriculum revisions have been made at Key Stage 4 and Post 16. It is considered that the changes that have been made in organisation and curriculum, together with an on-going review of teaching standards will raise levels of attainment at all stages. The work seen during the inspection at all key stages was in line with standards expected nationally.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

8 In order to raise further the standards of students' attainments and the quality of the school's provision, the governors and senior managers should:-

- XIV. Ensure that all students study DT at Key Stage 4 (paragraphs 2, 6, 43, 76, 127, 131).

In addition to the key issue above, the following points should be included in the plan:-

- XV. Time allowed for GNVQ courses should meet national recommendations; (paragraphs 2, 6, 48)

- XVI. The timetable review should provide for a more even distribution of the time given to some subjects and more time for history and modern languages at Key Stage 3 and RE Post 16 (paragraphs 2, 6, 47, 48, 76, 139, 159, 173, 174, 175).

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

9 The school has a mixed population of students aged 11 – 18. Although it is classified as a comprehensive school it does not have a fully comprehensive intake. About a quarter of students attending primary schools in the normal catchment area obtain places at the nearby grammar schools. This has the effect of depressing the average level of attainment of students entering the school. Overall achievement is a little below that expected of 11 year olds and the standard reached by girls is better than that of boys. With the demise of grant maintained status, Sir William Romney's has become a foundation school supported by the local education authority. Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. There are almost 800 students, about ten per cent more than at the last inspection. The school is of average size compared to comprehensive schools nationally. It serves a wide rural area around Tetbury and a few of the fifty per cent of students who come to school by bus travel more than 10 miles. A significant number of students live in nearby Nailsworth but some live in very rural settlements with very limited amenities. Although many students come from middle class backgrounds and the proportion eligible for free school meals is below the national average some students do live in quite deprived circumstances. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups. The proportions of students with SEN and of students with statements of SEN are above the national averages. This year 88 per cent of students remained in education beyond 16, which was a significant improvement on the previous two years. 60% of students moved to higher and further education at the age of 18. This was a lower figure than previous years but 32% moved to employment, many with the intention of entering higher education later when they have sufficient funds to support themselves.

10 The principal aim of the school, which is widely promulgated, is 'to be the best that we can be'.

11 Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1998	71	58	129

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students	Boys	41	38	44
At NC Level 5 or Above	Girls	54	47	47
	Total	95	85	91
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	73 (56)	65 (67)	69 (68)
	National	65 (57)	60 (60)	56 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	42 (17)	31 (43)	30 (30)
	National	35 (23)	36 (37)	27 (29)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students	Boys	29	48	40
At NC Level 5 or Above	Girls	49	53	48
	Total	78	101	88
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	60 (60)	76 (71)	67 (69)
	National	62 (59)	64 (63)	62 (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	25 (31)	50 (40)	33 (34)
	National	31 (28)	37 (37)	31 (29)

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	68	55	123

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of students achieving standard specified	Boys	32	61	63
	Girls	34	52	52
	Total	66	113	115
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	54 (51.3)	92 (91.5)	93 (99)
	National	44.6 (43.3)	89.8 (88.5)	95.2 (94)

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1998	14	26	40

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	18.1	18.8	18.6 (17.7)	5.3	5.0	5.2 (6.0)
National	N/A	N/A	17.6 (17.1)	N/A	N/A	2.8 (2.7)

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and Percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	School	Number	% Success rate
	National	36	66
			72.5

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

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

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School	%
	Absence	National comparative data	6.5
	Unauthorised	School	7.9
	Absence	National comparative data	0.3
			1.1

3

3

3

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of students (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	14
	Permanent	2

3

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	40
	Satisfactory or better	98
	Less than satisfactory	2

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

3 **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

3 **Attainment and progress**

12 Overall standards of attainment are better than reported at the last inspection.

13 Standards of attainment, as measured by performance in standard and national tests, at the end of Key Stage 2 in contributory primary schools are close to those found nationally. Over recent years, however, about a quarter of the students have been selected to take places in local grammar schools. Consequently the standards of attainment of students entering Year 7 are a little below national averages. The standards achieved by girls are better than those of boys.

14 Students make good progress in Key Stage 3. Over the three years 1996-98 average scores in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science were close to national averages. In 1998 results were in line with national averages in English and mathematics and better than them in science. In 1999 results in mathematics and science improved and were better than national averages, significantly so in science. 1999 results in English are subject to remarking. Compared with similar schools, that is schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals, results in 1999 were better in mathematics and much better in science. In recent years girls have done better than boys in English and mathematics, and boys have outperformed girls slightly in science. Teacher assessments against standardised national criteria show that the majority of students reached the national standard in DT, geography, history and ICT in 1999. Almost half of students reached the standard in modern languages. Results in ICT in 1999 were much better than those of 1998.

15 Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 4. Results over the last few years show that students' overall performance was better at GCSE than had been predicted on the basis of standardised test scores. Over the last three years the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes in GCSE at grades A*-C and A*-G was better than national averages. In 1998 the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A* -C was better than the national average and that of similar schools. The average points score of students was better than the national average and in line with similar schools. In 1999 the proportion of students with five or more A*-C passes fell slightly but the proportion of A*-C passes was higher than in 1998 and 1997. In 1998 the percentage of students with A*-C grades was much better than national averages in art, science, French and German, and worse in combined DT and drama. 1999 results were better than 1998 in history, English literature, drama, geography, ICT, DT and PE and worse in art and mathematics. 1999 results in music were very good. Over the last five years overall standards in GCSE have shown a rising trend but less marked than the national trend. The results of girls have been better than those of boys and the difference between them has been in line with the national position.

16 Over the three years 1996-98 the average scores in A Level and GNVQ of Post 16 students have been close to the national averages and much better than at the time of the last inspection. In 1998 the average points score was much better than the national average but it fell in 1999. In most subjects the number of entries each year is too small for valid comparison against national averages, but in 1999 17 of 19 students entered for GNVQ at intermediate and A Levels gained the full award. 28 of 31 students were successful in general studies at A Level and there were 100% successes in biology, chemistry, geography, history, English literature, French, German, media studies, drama and computer studies. There is no significant difference in the attainments of boys and girls at A Level.

17 Students are good listeners. In all areas of the curriculum they listen carefully to teachers and each other. Consequently in modern languages they speak with good accent and pronunciation. Students of all levels of attainment speak confidently. Students with SEN are able to discuss their work articulately and with a sound command of vocabulary. All students have a good grasp of technical language which they use appropriately. Students talk confidently about the work of artists. In English high attainers are able to talk

persuasively and successfully defend a point of view when the teacher plays devil's advocate. A strength of work in modern languages is in the high quality written coursework for both GCSE and A Level. In geography there is impressive original writing at Key Stage 4 and Post 16. Standards of writing in business reports in GNVQ and in mathematics coursework are good. Students are proficient in note taking, make good use of drafting, have a good understanding of writing for different audiences. In English at Key Stage 3 they write fluently with much imagination and expressive use of language. Standards of punctuation are good but many students experience problems with spelling. The school attaches particular importance to the development of reading. Much of form time, the early part of English lessons and withdrawal sessions are given over to private reading. Students who enter in Year 7 with poor reading skills make good progress and almost all have no problems with the reading requirements of the curriculum at Key Stage 4.

18 Standards of numeracy are always sound and often good. GNVQ business students confidently handle balance sheets, profit and loss accounts and trading accounts. GCSE business students make good use of percentages expressed in pie and bar chart forms to demonstrate results of investigations and in geography they collect, manipulate and depict data in various graphical and diagrammatic formats. In science students measure and carry out calculations accurately. Students are proficient in measuring, marking out, and working to scale in DT.

19 In many subjects students word process their final work. Students with SEN confidently use software programmes designed to improve literacy. GNVQ students use the computer for word processing, graphics, desk top publishing, databases and spreadsheets. In many subjects students use the Internet and CD ROMs for investigative work. They use the computer for composition work in music, for graphics in modern languages and spread sheets in mathematics. Standards in ICT and its use across the curriculum are much better than at the last inspection. Students at all key stages have a good range of skills which they use in lessons and in their own time. The school gives attention to the development of investigative skills. They figure in the learning skills programme in humanities in Key Stage 3 and in the programme to develop thinking skills in science. Standards of investigative work are strong in mathematics in Key Stage 4, in problem solving in DT, in research reading in the target language in modern languages by A Level students and in testing out hypotheses in geography.

20 Students make good progress across all key stages. Progress is directly associated with good teaching, the responsiveness of students and the quality of their learning skills. Students respond positively to the encouragement from teachers to become independent learners and take responsibility for their own work. Students entering GNVQ courses have the confidence and skills to come to terms quickly with the emphasis on independent working demanded by their courses. Enthusiasm for learning is maintained in an atmosphere where it is 'cool' to work hard and succeed.

21 Students with SEN make good progress in all the subject areas. In the two years 1998-99 38 students on the SEN register averaged seven passes in the GCSE examination and five students obtained at least five passes at grades A* - C in 1999. Similarly in 1999 two students with SEN each obtained three passes at A Level and another two gained merits at GNVQ. Most students with SEN were working at Level 4 in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in science and mathematics in 1999 (results in English are subject to remark). The reading improvement programme is proving effective; in 1997/98 31 of 44 students made gains in reading ages which exceeded their increases in age and 18 of 32 made similar progress in 1998/99. The gains made by students on the spelling programme were not so marked although two thirds made improvements of five months or more in spelling age.

22 The school has a very strong database for the measurement of individual student performance and its evaluation against projected progress. Currently the database is being refined to make information more easily available in a user-friendly form. When fully in operation the database system will be an important aid to progress for teachers and students.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

23 The overall response of students is very good, improving on the standards reported at the last inspection. Response is closely related to interesting teaching by committed staff who provide very good examples of consideration and respect for students. Students are eager to learn and willing to work. A few students are too ready to find fairly trivial reasons not to participate in PE.

24 Students have good powers of concentration. In art and DT they maintain attention and stay on task through the 100 minute double periods. Concentration is intense in performance and aural work in music. Students in modern languages and business studies are careful listeners to teachers and to each other. Some Key Stage 3 students do not give the same attention to work in PSE that they give to other subjects and too much teacher time is given to keeping them on task.

25 Students are confident. They readily put forward ideas and make considered judgements in art. They respond enthusiastically to encouragement to join in lively discussion in ICT. In all subjects they are confident to seek help and answer questions. In RE they are at ease expressing their views in front of their peers and in media studies they strongly defend a firmly held viewpoint. In geography they are uninhibited but thoughtful in discussion and debate. Students following the world of work course made elderly visitors feel very welcome and comfortable. Final year GNVQ students were relaxed in making individual and pair presentations to their peers.

26 The parental view that the school has good standards of behaviour is well founded. Standards of behaviour in class are almost always very good. Year 7 students were restless in work in textiles but otherwise behaviour in DT is exemplary. A few boys in Key Stage 3 were not motivated to work well in mixed dance classes. Students respond very well to the high expectations and clear structures provided by teachers for lessons. They are invariably courteous and helpful. Only occasionally is it necessary to exclude students temporarily and permanent exclusions are rare. There is very little bullying and when it occurs it is firmly dealt with. Behaviour around the school is very good. Students behave in a very civilised way in the crowded circulation areas between lessons and at break times. In lessons they show proper regard for safe working practice in the gymnasium, laboratories and workshops. There is no evidence of graffiti and litter levels are low. Students take pride in their work and surroundings. They handle expensive equipment sensitively in science, take care of instruments in music, and can be trusted to use the ICT workshops and the library with the minimum of supervision.

27 Students work very well with others. They show high self discipline in group work in drama and music, team skills are good in PE and they are able to work co-operatively and reach joint decisions on problem solving tasks in DT. In all subjects students work constructively in pairs and small groups with minimum supervision. Some of the outcomes of group co-operation among GNVQ students are impressive. Relationships with staff and among students are excellent and make an important contribution to the positive ethos of the school. Students support each other and are proud of the achievements of others. Students with SEN are fully integrated into the social life of the school. They have excellent relationships with support staff. Boys and girls work together very productively in media studies.

28 Students respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. As members of teams they demonstrate a well developed sense of responsibility in drama, music and PE. Duties as assistant librarians, receptionists, 'green' team members, school councillors, prefects and team captains are carried out conscientiously. Students volunteer for charity work and assist with the organisation of social and school events.

29 Gains in maturity are very evident as students pass through the school. The maturity of the work of senior students in drama is outstanding. Students respond very positively to the encouragement they have from teachers to take responsibility for themselves and their work.

30 Post 16 students are mature young people, well organised and with a wide range of learning skills. GNVQ students settle quickly to the new and demanding learning styles required by their courses. Many people from business and the community associated with the school have written to the registered inspector

about the confidence, courtesy and good attitudes to work among students they meet on placements or on visits to the school. Students on placements establish very good relationships with adults; their relationships with elderly people in residential care have been given particular praise.

3 **Attendance**

31 Attendance is good and at 92.3% is above the national average. Unauthorised absence at 0.03% is much lower than the average nationally. A few students in Years 10 and 11 have a poor record of attendance which is having a negative effect on their progress in GCSE. In addition, a very small number of students are regular truants. In all tutor groups registration takes place promptly and there is an efficient start to morning and afternoon sessions. Lessons start on time, and this and the good record of attendance have a very positive effect on students' attitude, attainment and progress. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully maintained its good whole-school attendance rates.

3 **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

3 **Teaching**

32 Standards of teaching are better than at the time of the last inspection. The proportions of good and very good teaching are exceptionally high and unsatisfactory teaching is rare. Teaching is at least good in 80% of lessons and at least very good in 40%. Teaching is best at Post 16 where almost 90% is at least good. It is consistently very strong in geography, drama, art and media studies. It is very strong in mathematics, ICT and music at Key Stage 4 and in science, RE, PE and English at Post 16. Teaching is consistently strong in English literature, business studies, GNVQ and world of work. There is some outstanding teaching in German. There are no subject areas, including general studies and personal and social education (PSE) in which teaching is weak.

33 Specialist teachers have a good command of their subjects and in RE non-specialists are well prepared. Subject knowledge in media studies is excellent. Teachers have a good understanding of examination requirements which teachers of science particularly put to good use in revision sessions. Almost all teachers in the GNVQ area have a good grasp of the requirements of the courses. Teachers of modern languages have a very good command of accent, pronunciation and idiom in their target language. Knowledge and understanding of ICT is very strong among the core teachers and many others have the knowledge and confidence to make good use of ICT in lessons. Specialist teaching and support for students with SEN is well informed and sensitive to their needs.

34 Teachers plan their lessons very well. Almost all lessons have clear objectives which are made known to students. Planning is very strong in drama and very thorough by newly qualified teachers in PE. In modern languages it is best when teachers select from a variety of materials allowing for flexibility of approach.

35 Expectations of students are high and most classrooms have a challenging atmosphere. Band rehearsals in music demand very high standards. Perceptions, stereotypical notions and prejudices are challenged in drama. Many subjects make good use of questions and discussion to extend the thinking skills of students – this is a strong feature of media studies and science. Expectations are generally high in history at Key Stage 3 but there is a need to give greater challenge to high attainers. Expectations of commitment and involvement need to be raised at Key Stage 3 in PE. Teachers of business studies and the world of work course seek and obtain high commitment from students. The teaching of German is very challenging but some modern language lessons lack pace and rigour. Teachers of art and ICT expect students to work to a very high standard - in art this extends to work done at home.

36 Standards of classroom management are high. Clear structures for lessons, especially in Key Stage 3, high expectations of commitment to work and excellent relationships all contribute to the good learning

environment. Teachers have effective techniques for obtaining the attention of Key Stage 3 students at the beginning of lessons enabling them to make a brisk start. Teachers of Key Stage 3 groups are usually firm but relationships are good. Too much time, however, is taken in securing the attention of students in some PSE lessons and there should be a greater focus on good listening and observing in some PE lessons. In almost all cases Key Stage 4 and Post 16 students are well motivated to succeed and classroom relationships are very productive. The tutorial role is well developed among teachers of GNVQ students.

37 Teachers effectively employ a wide range of approaches to teaching and learning. Many lessons follow a similar successful pattern. They begin with explanation followed by questions and discussions to check understanding; move to student directed work with teacher support and return to full class consideration of results to inform conclusions. This pattern was followed very successfully in a geography lesson on flood prevention. Teachers make good use of personal experiences and anecdotes to add interest. A very high proportion of teaching is lively and enthusiastic. This contributes, for example, to a very creative and stimulative atmosphere in ICT lessons where students very readily join in discussion. The creative approach is less evident in textiles. Lessons provide well sequenced activities with a good balance of time for them, although in science motivation flags when too much time is given to an activity. Time is very well used in withdrawal sessions for students with SEN. Good use is made of support for students with SEN but this would be more effective if support staff were made aware of lesson plans – it is only in textiles and science that early information is given. Very good use is made of time and resources in media studies, business studies, world of work, geography, drama, music and German. Some teaching of low attaining students at Key Stage 3 in mathematics lacks pace and places too much emphasis on whole class teaching. Teachers of modern languages make good use of audio visual resources. There is excellent use of ICT in Key Stage 4 mathematics but it should be more frequently used in English and some mathematics lessons are too textbook dependent. Very many teachers take advantage of resources outside the school to add interest, relevance and breadth to their work.

38 In almost all cases teaching is well matched to the learning requirements of students. In geography tasks are differentiated by outcome and by level. Task sheets to meet different levels of attainment are well used in science in Years 7 and 8. In mathematics at Key Stage 4 there is provision for both early entry and graduated assessment groups for GCSE. An open ended approach allows all students to make progress in art, design, world of work and PE. Task sheets are available for extension work in history and in RE a heavy emphasis on discussion allows all students to be fully involved. A strong feature of teacher questioning is that it targets a large number of students.

39 Standards of marking are good. Marking is thorough and consistent in geography and there are good arrangements for self-assessment. There are good arrangements for self-assessment in music. The marking of examination work is very helpful in PE and helpful comments are given in history and RE. Marking is good in modern languages but is insufficiently formative and does not require corrections. It is prompt and informative in science.

40 Homework is set and marked regularly. Students feel that the homework load is manageable but feel pressured when they have work in the same subject on consecutive days. In geography some homework is well used to introduce the next topic. In science it is used to develop research and extend writing skills. There are some differentiated expectations of homework in modern languages and standards of homework are good although some lessons do not allow adequate time to set it. Homework is well planned in history.

41 Teaching of students with SEN is strong. All teachers have copies of individual education plans (IEPs) and are aware of the individual needs of students. There is some very effective teaching in bottom sets in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 but some students have difficulty meeting the objectives of lessons in mixed ability groups in English at Key Stage 3. In withdrawal groups students work to carefully focused targets which include confidence building and independent working as well as improved literacy.

42 Relationships between staff and students are very good indeed. Teachers provide excellent role models and treat students with considerable respect. Teachers are invariably courteous and sensitive to students' needs. Many teachers successfully bring humour to their classes. They give positive feedback with lots of encouragement and celebration of success. Students are confident of the help and support available to

them.

3 **The curriculum and assessment**

43 The broad and balanced curriculum provides good opportunities for achieving the intellectual, social, physical and moral aims set out in the published curriculum policy statement. All National Curriculum requirements are met except for the need for all Key Stage 4 students to study DT. The school plans to correct this anomaly in the next academic year.

44 In Key Stage 3 nearly all students study the full range of National Curriculum subjects, RE and PSE. ICT and drama are taught as discrete subjects. In Year 8, French complements the study of German, started in Year 7. The organisation of the modern languages attainment groups in Year 8 is however, somewhat inflexible. This slows the pace of the programme for some higher attainers. Arrangements in the current Year 9 are much better, allowing fine-tuning of the ability groupings, with one small group of slower learners concentrating on the study of one language. In Year 7 an innovative humanities skill programme is designed to supplement the history and geography provision and develop research and independent working skills that have relevance across the curriculum.

45 In Key Stage 4, all students study English and most also take English literature. This is combined with mathematics, double award science, PE, RE, PSE and a modern foreign language. A good range of 11 options, which includes a new programme in business studies, provides scope for a further three choices. The majority of students can, therefore take up to nine subjects at GCSE plus the short course GCSE in RE. Included in the options is a City & Guilds accredited world of work course which adds a well planned, effective vocational dimension to the Key Stage 4 curriculum. This course provides a good basis for progression onto more advanced Post 16 GNVQ or occupational training programmes in school, further education or employment. Students learn through class work and wider based practical activities, acquiring effective skills and some understanding of the world of work.

46 The Post 16 curriculum is comprehensive. Twenty A Level courses include studies in media, psychology, drama, PE, economics, and sociology as well as the traditional extension subjects. There is strong vocational provision through intermediate and advanced GNVQ programmes in Health and Social Care, Business and Leisure & Tourism that currently recruits just under half of all Post 16 students. The foreign languages at work course adds to the emerging vocational emphasis. There are also opportunities for improvement of GCSE performance in mathematics and English. This provision is economically organised. It offers good in-school opportunities for most Key Stage 4 students and is an appropriate foundation for progression to further, higher education, or employment.

47 RE provision in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 has been improved since the last report. There is sufficient time and the schemes of work follow the objectives of the Gloucestershire agreed syllabus. Post 16 RE does not yet meet the statutory requirements. The very small allocation of time within the general studies course falls well short of the 10-15 hours prescribed by the agreed syllabus. The well designed Key Stage 3 PSE programme is delivered by form tutors. The quality of the teaching varies according to the commitment and confidence of the form tutors. In Key Stage 4, the impact is more consistent since a small and experienced team teaches PSE. Teachers build on earlier work to cover further modules of health education (including sex and drugs education reflecting the policies endorsed by the school governors), and the consideration of values and attitudes in the context of personal and social development. Careers education and guidance are good. The course is carefully co-ordinated, delivered by experienced staff and involves effective liaison with careers advisors who give independent advice. Work experience opportunities are offered to all Year 10 students. Students play an active role in seeking their own placements which are often obtained through direct established links with local commercial, business, educational and community care organisations. Students with special needs receive particular guidance. The careers guidance programme has a good range of up to date reference material and access to computer software, to help students analyse their strengths and weaknesses in preparation for career choices at 16+. Post 16 students continue to receive good support. Advice about further and higher education is very effective and the application processes are well organised. Students and parents speak favourably about the nature and quality of the careers education and guidance programme.

48 The length of the taught week conforms to national recommendations. The deployment of teaching expertise is generally appropriate but there are some issues in the way the timetable is organised. The allocation to DT is much more generous. In Years 8 and 9, time for history is below national norms which inhibits in-depth studies. The allocation of teaching time for two foreign languages in Key Stage 3 is insufficient, particularly when some classes have a very uneven distribution of lessons across the two-week timetable. 'Clustering' of most lessons within one week also occurs in other subjects, creating gaps of several days and inhibiting the continuity of learning. Time allocated to Post 16 GNVQ programmes is below the minimum national recommendations. The school is aware of the above anomalies and is carrying out a full timetable review.

49 The school tries hard to ensure equal access to the curriculum and maintain continuity of learning between the key stages. The very good liaison with feeder primary schools is a notable feature and curriculum links exist in the core subjects. Visits by Years 5 and 6 students and involvement in school events help to ensure a worry free transfer to secondary education. The high quality of the induction programme, the associated flow of information to parents and the early meetings between teachers and parents all provide a very good way of maintaining continuity of learning between Key Stages 2 and 3. Effective subject planning and sound day-to-day assessment systems, maintain this momentum through the key stages in the school.

50 The extra curricular opportunities at lunchtime and after school are wide-ranging in relation to the size of the school and in spite of after school transport problems. Recent statistics indicate that overall, 65% of boys and 50% of girls are involved with sporting activities. There is good provision of team games, including inter-school and in-school competitions, as well as activities such as table tennis, athletics, cross country, tennis etc. There are very good drama, choral and instrumental music opportunities. Many of the more experienced students help to run the various music groups, giving guidance on singing, leading ensembles, and generally supporting the lunchtime provision. There is a good tradition of school music and drama productions that contribute to the life of the local community. These are complemented by well established foreign exchange visits, field visits, Post 16 university visits, theatre and gallery trips, subject related clubs in science, astronomy, art and ICT. The links with industry are also extended through 'Insight into Industry' activities which involve students in vocational problem solving exercises. Students are well aware of the range of opportunities and levels of participation are high.

51 There are good procedures for the assessment of student attainment and progress at subject and school level. Subject judgements are frequently based on regular assessment exercises with results carefully recorded to develop longer-term evaluation of progress. This information is used to decide the ability groupings which operate in some core subjects. In Key Stage 3, teachers apply the marking codes set out in the school policy on assessment. The definitions of the codes are displayed throughout the school and students know what they mean and can judge how well they are doing. Records and reports meet all statutory requirements and generally convey good information to students and parents. At whole school level, there is a good use of data to calculate the value added by the school. There is sound base line of information, which is progressively extended as the students move through the key stages and externally standardised data provides heads of faculty with statistically projected examination grades for each student. There is an emerging system for individual target setting, backed by monitoring of the progress of individuals and providing guidance and support. This is not yet embedded in the organisational procedures of year groups or subject departments but has the potential to improve standards of attainment and progress. A great deal of effort is invested in analysing examination performance. There is good information on the relative performance of individuals across the range of subjects. Most departments use this to adjust teaching and learning programmes and negotiate subject targets for examination performance with the senior management team.

52 Assessment, reviewing, reporting and recording requirements for SEN are in place. All students who are withdrawn from aspects of the curriculum have personal learning programmes. IEPs are kept up to date and subject teachers are well informed about special needs. Most subjects have not appointed a teacher to provide an information link to the SEN co-ordinator.

53 The school has made significant progress since the last inspection. There is a curriculum policy agreed by governors which has been translated into practice. Assessment and cross-curricular use of ICT is now

generally good. RE provision is much strengthened in Key Stages 3 and 4 and this has had an impact on the status of the subject. RE examination courses now operate effectively for nearly all students in Key Stage 4 and as a Post 16 A Level option. The Post 16 provision is now organised in an economical way and the range of choice is good. Some issues relating to the organisation of the curriculum remain, particularly concerning aspects of time allocation and the clustering of lessons within the two-week timetable. Tutorial time is not always used effectively to secure a crisp start to the school day.

3

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

54 The school's mission statement and declared aims underpin real commitment and a powerful contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. This is achieved through a conscious awareness of opportunities, through the examples set by staff and through the contribution of curricular and classroom experiences. High expectations, friendly relationships, mutual respect, concern for others and acceptance of worthwhile values permeate school life and help to explain the caring ethos which pervades.

55 Whilst the Christian tradition is occasionally supported in assemblies and a Christian dimension is apparent through RE, the input of local clergy, the annual Carol Service and in the celebration of Christian values, spiritual education is seen in broader terms. Students learn from, as well as about, religion and opportunities for reflection and discussion within a spiritual framework arise in art, music, science, the humanities and English.

56 Students gather for twice weekly assemblies in lower and upper school and for a single weekly assembly Post 16. Those observed during the inspection were driven by the school's intention that assemblies provide spiritual insight and develop commitment to a positive outlook on life and were well received. In one, Remembrance Sunday prompted a haunting folk song which took students back to the Australian involvement in the Gallipoli Campaign and, in a spiritual atmosphere, gave the day a strongly reflective start. In others, the themes of trust and forgiveness were used to good effect to boost self esteem through strong moral and social context. Whilst assemblies were moving and valuable occasions, they were not daily acts of corporate worship and, in this respect, the school remains in breach of its statutory duty.

57 The moral dimension inscribed in the school's aims is reflected in the easy, positive relationships between staff and students, respect for a school environment untarnished by graffiti or litter and in the behaviour and demeanour of students. It is supported by a well sequenced PSE programme, delivered particularly effectively in Key Stage 4, which involves personal knowledge and behaviour, rights and responsibilities, citizenship, environmental awareness and equal opportunities. It is fostered by conscious awareness of safe practice in laboratories, by fair play on the games field and by the curricular content of many subjects. RE and English, for example, introduce an ethical dimension in tackling racism, euthanasia, discrimination; geography and science, an empathetic approach to such topics as managing the environment, conflict in land use and aid for third world countries; music considers slavery through the development of popular music and there is much discussion of moral issues in English and history. Sex education is set within a clear moral framework.

58 Provision for social education begins before the students enter the school with a purposeful three day induction programme for Year 6 students supported by a weekend for many Year 7 students in the Isle of Wight. The many instances of group and paired working in lessons nurture collaboration. Team situations are well used for problem solving in DT and the collaborative approach of much of the GNVQ teaching. Good behaviour sits easily alongside an unequivocal behaviour policy and is realized in the effective working of anti-bullying measures, in the high levels of individual maturity which repay the school's trust in allowing largely unrestricted access to its facilities, and in the acceptance of responsibility, much of which is designed to foster initiative, whether as prefects or members of the school council, sixth form council, green team, librarians, mentors for lower school students, helping with games, leading music groups or as receptionists. Students know right from wrong and are encouraged to care for and respect others within the school and in the wider community as they do via charitable work, work experience, involvement with primary schools and elderly people.

59 The range of opportunities provided by the school to extend students' understanding of their own and other cultural traditions is very good. Apart from the curricular contribution of geography, RE and other subjects, much of it through case study, debate and empathy, electronic mail is particularly well used. Conferring with Father Christmas was a treat for all. There is an extensive programme of exchanges in modern languages, an art visit to Paris and regular trips to theatres and galleries. Actors and drama companies, artists, performers, writers and musicians visit regularly and there is an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, concerts and productions, many of which further promote and extend cultural understanding and social interaction.

60 Much of the very good practice in terms of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplified in the success of the annual activities week, the Insight into Industry day for Year 9 students after SATS; the arts week; the sports week; the book week; the media day; and the staff and parents drug awareness evening. The successful partnership of three very different sixth forms in Tetbury, Malmesbury and Westonbirt makes very strong contributions to personal development through the leadership day, European day and other joint ventures. In these ways, the school has built on the high level of provision observed at the time of the previous inspection.

3 **Support, guidance and students' welfare**

61 Very good support and guidance is provided for all students, and this has been well maintained and extended since the last inspection, confirming the positive view of parents and students that the school is a very caring establishment. The high quality of support provided by staff, particularly form tutors, has a very positive effect on standards and progress. Very good relationships between staff and students, and between the students themselves, create a very welcoming and friendly environment.

62 Procedures for monitoring and managing behaviour and discipline are very good and are consistently applied throughout the school. Good behaviour and self-discipline are promoted well and the system of rewards and sanctions supported by praise and encouragement. Most students respond well to the school's behaviour management system. Consistent strategies are followed for dealing with any harassment or bullying, and incidents are recognised, recorded and well followed up.

63 Very good procedures are in place for monitoring attendance. Registers are completed consistently and accurately through a computerized system, and statutory requirements are met. Unauthorised absence is followed up quickly, through the system of monitoring which is consistently followed by form tutors and administrative staff. The education welfare officer provides good quality and regular support for the school. Procedures are followed to monitor punctuality and students sign a late book if they arrive after registration. Post 16 students are responsible for signing in and out themselves but their whereabouts are well monitored by tutors.

64 Students with SEN receive good additional support from tutors and support assistants to enable them to take part in all educational activities. All students have access to outside support agencies with whom the school liaises very effectively. As a result of strong primary liaison, needs are well monitored and recorded with good continuity of support on transfer. This makes a strong contribution to the good progress made towards the targets in students' IEPs.

65 Procedures for child protection are good and meet statutory requirements. Clear guidelines are contained in the staff handbook. One of the deputy headteachers has designated responsibility for child protection issues, and has attended a training course. All staff are aware of procedures through annual updating and good procedures are in place for contacting external agencies when necessary.

66 Health and safety issues are well monitored and promoted. The health and safety representative and the site supervisor are supported by a clear policy on safety issues. A formal risk assessment of the site is carried out annually. Regular fire practices are held and the buildings are evacuated. During the inspection an unplanned evacuation of the buildings took place, which was carried out very efficiently. Electrical equipment

and fire appliances are checked regularly. Good arrangements are made for first aid with qualified staff on site. An accident book is kept and first aid equipment is conveniently located. Good arrangements are made for dealing with students who become ill whilst in school. Students are constantly made aware of safe practices during lessons such as PE, science and DT and whilst moving around the school.

67 Procedures for monitoring progress and personal development are good. Very careful monitoring takes place in Key Stage 4 which includes target setting. A similar system is to be introduced shortly into Key Stage 3. All students prepare a Record of Achievement as they move through the school. Personal and social development is monitored well through PSE which includes sex education and drugs awareness.

3 **Partnership with parents and the community**

68 The school has a very good partnership with parents and the community which makes a strong impact on standards and quality of education. This partnership has been well maintained since the last inspection. The school sees parents as 'critical friends' and parents speak highly of the encouragement to be involved and most feel welcome in the school. All students have an organiser which parents sign each week to agree that homework assignments have been completed on time. Good home/school links have been established and parents are contacted directly on such issues as attendance, underachievement and celebration of success. In accordance with statutory requirements, parents have received a copy of the Home/School Agreement. The parents of students with SEN are very well informed and are invited to attend all formal review and assessment meetings. The PTFA is very active and through fund raising events provides the school with many additional resources.

69 The quality of information provided for parents is very good, and the majority of parents feel well informed. The prospectus is attractive and provides clear information for parents. Regular consultation evenings are held for each year group, when good opportunities are provided for parents to understand curriculum issues. In addition, parents receive regular helpful information in the half-termly newsletters, and informative booklets are available to assist parents to support their children's learning. The annual reports provide good information about attainment and progress with effort and attainment grades and exam levels. Students write their own statement and targets for improvement. All subjects of the National Curriculum are reported separately.

70 The enrichment of the work of the school through its community links is excellent. There is good liaison with the feeder primary schools who regularly use the sports centre facilities. Students have the opportunity to assist primary students with sport and drama activities. Through links with the Cheltenham and Cotswold Education Business Partnership the school joins with other secondary schools in the area to discuss common issues and joint projects such as management day when Post 16 students took part in a short marketing project. This partnership has also provided teacher placements to support the GNVQ leisure and tourism course. Excellent working relationships have been developed between the school and the local police and currently they are working together on a drugs education exercise in addition to the normal drugs education programme. The school receives good support from the Cotswold District Council, and students took part in a 'shadow council' event with other schools as part of the school enrichment week. Students in Year 10 go out on community service to the British Red Cross, local nursing homes and playgroups, where consumers speak highly of their performance and achievements. A range of visitors from the community enrich the curriculum and provide students with additional experience, for example, a newspaper editor, political journalist and film producer visited to talk to students in Years 12 and 13. Students have the opportunity to go on regular visits to enrich and support the curriculum, for example, Year 9 students visited the Bristol Museum to see an exhibition on slavery and took part in a mock court case about the slave trade.

71 Links with industry are very strong and make a very positive contribution to students' progress and achievements. Local businesses and industries provide very good support for work experience. Many industrialists visit the school's annual 'Insight into Industry' days, and one local company director serves as a partnership governor to strengthen further the partnership between the school and industry.

3 THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

3 Leadership and management

72 Leadership and management have become much more effective since the last inspection and are now major strengths. They have been a very positive influence for the many improvements which have taken place. They have been responsible for the systems now in place and generated the commitment to high standards which together place the school in a very strong position to develop further.

73 The strong partnership between governors and managers is a major contributory factor to the strength of the present regime. Governors are knowledgeable and committed. They are closely involved in all aspects of the school but there is a very clear acknowledgement of the management role of the headteacher. Governors make important contributions to development and financial planning. They take a particular interest in the evaluation of outcomes and processes and the improvement of cost effectiveness. Since the last inspection the structure of governors' sub-committees has been revised. Committees take responsibility for areas of strategic planning and for the review of earlier plans; they require evidence of implementation and performance against targets.

74 The senior management has a high profile. Regular briefings, attachments to faculties, a consultative approach which involves staff, parents and students and a physical presence around the site have considerably improved lines of communication and brought understanding and commitment from staff for the aims of the school. Their success has been enhanced by an open management style and the delegation of authority to an appropriate level. It has created a listening and learning environment in which all feel valued. Most importantly the leadership gives clear direction. It aims for high standards and accountability by all members of the school community. Students are proud of their school and parents are strongly supportive of it. It has a very positive ethos.

75 Developmental planning which includes review and evaluation is a part of a continuous cycle, fully integrated into the life of the school and reaching all parts of it. Curriculum planning and the use of resources are informed by whole school and faculty considerations. Annual faculty reviews, which touch all areas of activity, form a very valuable part of the development process and make important contributions to staff morale and ownership. The reviews incorporate teaching observations and staff development as well as curriculum and organisational matters. The delegation of resources for staff development to faculties enables them to tailor their staff development programmes to overall plans. Planning takes a longer term strategic view as well as a short term statement which is fully integrated with the financial plan. These arrangements allow staff to have confidence in the planning process.

76 The school is well aware of the gap between overall performance of girls and boys in Key Stages 3 and 4 and is introducing a number of approaches to improve standards of boys' work. Similarly, although it has a good equal opportunities policy and a strong careers programme, students continue to make stereotypical subject choices. The school is committed to providing for the needs of all its students and there is no evidence of discriminatory practice. Policies, management and support for students with SEN meet statutory requirements and are effective. At this time the statutory requirement for all students to study DT at Key Stage 4 is not being met but will be rectified in the next academic year. Provision for RE is much better than at the last inspection; curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 fully meets statutory requirements and the school is working towards the expectation of the Agreed Syllabus at Post 16. The school continues not to offer a daily act of collective worship although assemblies have powerful reflective themes and provide a good start to the day.

77 With the exception of the act of collective worship the key issues raised at the last inspection have been dealt with effectively. Most of the items concerned leadership and management issues and have been referred to above. In addition the previous report proposed that a curriculum policy should be developed, the structure of the timetable reviewed and standards raised in A Level. There is a comprehensive curriculum policy and standards at A Level have improved significantly. The timetable has been reviewed and although

some of the problems raised at the last inspection have been dealt with the review is ongoing and concerns about the allocation and distribution of time remain.

3 **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

78 Overall there are sufficient qualified teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. The balance of age and experience is good and a high proportion of staff hold posts of responsibility. The school is well served by its skilled non-teaching staff who are sufficient in number to enable the school to function effectively. The gender imbalance in senior posts, referred to in the last report, continues to apply. Women are significantly under-represented both on the senior management team and among heads of faculty and year groups.

79 Procedures for the induction of staff new to the school are clear and effective. Newly qualified teachers are well supported by their mentors and by the senior management team. The school has well established links with Bath University and Cheltenham and Gloucester College for the training of ITT students who receive good support within their faculty. Professional development is a strong feature of the school's provision. Responsibility for the review and development of staff has recently been devolved to faculty and pastoral heads who observe teaching, discuss performance and identify training needs. This new role for middle managers, for which they have been appropriately trained, is one of several effective measures the school has taken since the last inspection to address the key issue calling for training of staff in posts of responsibility. Another productive measure has been the formation of a management group bringing together academic and pastoral managers, and chaired by one of their number.

80 The school has pleasant, spacious and well appointed accommodation, much of it purpose built for specialist use. Since the last inspection several improvements to the accommodation have been made, most notably the fine new humanities block, and the main issues mentioned in the report have been put right. Disabled access has been improved. Good plans are now in place for long term maintenance and refurbishment. New practice rooms have expanded music provision, but the mobile classroom for music is too small for good practical work to be carried out. Amenities for sport, many of them shared with the wider community, are excellent, although girls' and boys' changing rooms lack toilet facilities. Buildings and grounds are kept in very good order and are largely free of litter. Subject areas have good accommodation, most of it grouped together and sufficient to allow teachers to have their own teaching base. Well presented collections of students' work are on display in classrooms, corridors and central areas of the school.

81 Provision of learning resources for most areas of the curriculum is good and all of the shortages mentioned in the last report have been put right. However, the mathematics faculty does not have enough textbooks for students to take home with them. Also, the music department does not have enough full size key boards for its needs, and the small ones are unsuitable. Computers throughout the school are sufficient, up to date and well used.

82 The school library is a very good resource. It is spacious and welcoming and is efficiently managed by a librarian who vigorously promotes it so that it is well used in lessons and during students' free time. Some subject areas make very good use of the library, but there is still room for more use by others. The provision of books, periodicals and multi-media software, including controlled access to the Internet, is ample and up to date, encouraging good reading and research habits and appealing to all ages and levels of attainment. All Year 7 students receive very good induction into library use and protocol. A number of Post 16 students provide valuable assistance to the librarian during the time it is open at lunch. As the library is very well used during this time, there would be considerable benefits in finding a way of keeping it open for the full sixty minutes.

83 Good use is made of resources outside the school. There is a wide range of visits to galleries, museums and the theatre. Field work is well used in geography and science. Students broaden their experience with residential visits in the UK and annual trips to Europe and beyond.

84 Major improvements have occurred in financial planning since the last inspection. The budget and management plan stem from the longer term strategic plan which anticipates changes which will affect the school and sets targets. The management plan is costed and built into the budget. These arrangements are serving the school well; they have allowed it to meet almost all the criticisms made at the last inspection about poor provision for education resources and to create a revenue surplus over the last two years to meet contingencies associated with the change from grant maintained to foundation status. The governors have made successful bids for capital funding to make important improvements to the accommodation and to the quality and quantity of equipment for ICT. There are very tight financial regulations, which along with systems of financial control and management fully met the requirements of the Funding Agency at the last external audit in March of this year. All budget holders have received training in the use of the school business manual. Spending is carefully controlled; the bursars office maintains a daily record on revenue balances and commitments and imposes an appropriate threshold level on spending to avoid overspending. Budget statements go to all meetings of the finance committee of the governors who consider all proposed variations in the budget. At the same time the regulations provide sufficient flexibility to ensure that financial administration does not interfere with good management.

85 The structure of the budget is subject to ongoing scrutiny. Since the last inspection the viability of Post 16 work has improved substantially and in the last financial year it provided a small measure of support to other areas of the school's work. There is some concern, however, that in respect of GNVQ work the school is cutting its cloth too tightly. All areas of externally funded work are examined very carefully. Tenders are monitored for best price and cost effective arrangements have been made for provision of gas and electricity, grounds maintenance and school meals. The school has in-house arrangements for cleaning and for much of its minor works programme. The governors and management are alert to possible sources of external funding. In addition to their successful bids for capital funding they have obtained grants for ICT, for new training initiatives and for partnership work with two nearby secondary schools. They are seeking to match funding from the Lawn Tennis Association to provide new tennis courts and preparing a further bid on the ground of basic need to improve further the school accommodation.

86 The per capita funding, student:staff ratios and class-contact times are all within the average range for secondary schools with Post 16 provision. Even so staff are deployed very effectively. This is a small school with a very broad range of provision. Many staff have heavy responsibilities which they carry out very effectively. The school is similarly well served by its non-teaching staff. The smooth working of the school is due, in no small measure, to the quality of the technical, administrative and educational support.

87 The support funded by the local authority for students with SEN is fully used and supplemented from the school's budget. Significant benefit comes to students from the considerable time given to extra-curricular activity by staff and to both curricular and extra-curricular activity by a wide diversity of business people, community workers and friends of the school. Good use is made of the school accommodation. The arrangements of faculties allows efficient working and the allocation of areas to students leads to a sense of ownership and respect for property. There is very heavy room use which has been a contributory factor in the bids for funding for additional accommodation. Benefit comes from the dual use agreement of the facilities of the adjoining leisure centre. Educational resources are effectively used. Especially heavy use is made of the library and the ICT workshops.

88 Governors and managers have particular regard for the need to monitor cost effectiveness. Evaluation of value for money forms an integral part of all management processes. Recently the school has made a short-term appointment with the aim of making assessment information more readily available to staff for target setting and performance evaluation. Good use is already made of information from the local authority and external assessment systems to calculate the effectiveness of provision against the performance of students. Having regard for standards on entry, the quality of education provided, the resources available and the attainment and progress of students, the school gives very good value for money.

3 PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

3 ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

3 English

89 Results in the national tests in English at the end of Key Stage 3 for 1997 and 1998 were in line with the national average and comparable to schools with students from a similar background. In 1998 standards were higher than in 1997. Standards in English were similar to those in mathematics and a little lower than in science. Girls achieved higher standards than boys reflecting the national difference.

90 Emphasis is given to silent reading at the beginning of lessons and by the end of Key Stage 3 high attaining students read widely showing increasing discrimination and understanding of literary texts. In lessons they comment intelligently on the characters and plots of novels such as 'The Tulip Touch' and 'The Eighteenth Emergency' and write fluently with increasing accuracy in spelling and punctuation. Middle attaining students achieve good standards in reading but some of the boys are reluctant to write at length. Low attaining students can read increasingly complex texts and write with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Students can communicate their ideas in discussion and they listen attentively to teachers and to each other. Standards of attainment of the present cohort of Key Stage 3 students are in line with national standards.

91 Progress in lessons at Key Stage 3 is often good and is never less than satisfactory. Literacy levels on entry to the school are just below the national average but all students make at least satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3. High attaining students make good progress in developing advanced reading skills and writing more sophisticated essays. Middle attaining students develop confidence in expressing a point of view, read widely and improve the accuracy of their written work. The emphasis on redrafting essays is having an effect on the quality of the content and mechanical accuracy of written work. Many students write fluently with much imagination and expressive language. Students of all abilities participate well in class discussions and enjoy private reading opportunities. Students with SEN make good progress in those lessons where they are supported by skilled classroom assistants. Over the key stage they make satisfactory progress in reading and improve the spelling and punctuation of their written work.

92 Results in GCSE English from 1996-1998 were above the national average. English Literature results were well above the national average except for a sharp decline in 1998 when the school changed examination boards. The 1999 results were comparable to those achieved in 1996 and 1997.

93 By the end of Key Stage 4 high attaining students can write confidently and perceptively using a wide written vocabulary. They use literary critical terms to enhance their understanding of set texts. In Year 11 students' responses to the poetry and imagery of Ted Hughes display a mature understanding of his ideas and language. Middle attaining students can talk coherently about their work and standards of written work are satisfactory. Many of these students have advanced reading skills. Low attaining students achieve satisfactory standards in reading but their writing is weaker. Standards of attainment are above the national average in English and are well above in English Literature.

94 Progress at Key Stage 4 in lessons and over time is good. The majority of students make good progress in speaking, listening and reading. Sound progress is made in writing. High attaining students develop skills in writing different types of essays using a more extensive written vocabulary. They read fluently and with understanding and discuss new ideas confidently. Middle attaining students develop advanced reading skills and are more prepared to write longer essays. Low attaining students continue to make good progress in improving their reading and the quality of written work improves steadily. SEN students make satisfactory progress in improving reading and writing. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls although girls are prepared to spend longer on redrafting their work.

95 In 1998 and 1999 Post 16 students achieved examination results in media studies and English which

were above the national average. The present cohort of students are achieving high standards in both subjects. Written work is of a very good standard. In media studies Year 12 and 13 students demonstrate high order skills in conducting research, thinking divergently and presenting complex ideas clearly. In English they are capable of using knowledge from other subject areas to discuss literary texts such as 'The Power of Angels'. Students make very good progress in both subjects.

96 Students' attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school. Their behaviour around the school and in lessons is excellent. They respond well to encouragement and complete homework regularly. Work done at home is usually of a good standard and many parents provide appropriate support. Students listen attentively, work hard and can concentrate for increasingly longer periods of time as they progress through school. When given the opportunity they work well in groups and learn from each other. They use the library sensibly to borrow books for private reading and as a resource for individual research.

97 The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is very good Post 16, good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory and often good at Key Stage 3. Teachers have a sound knowledge of their subject and lessons are well planned. Relationships with students and behaviour management in lessons are of a high standard. Students can concentrate on their work in quiet classrooms. The assessment and marking of written work is detailed and constructive and has a impact on improving standards. Targets for improvements are set for individual students and this provides a framework for students to improve their work. Teachers plan their lessons carefully although there is a need to ensure in mixed ability classes at Key Stage 3 that written tasks are understood by all students. The teaching of literature is of a high standard particularly at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 and this has a real impact on improving standards. Teachers set homework regularly and this contributes towards improving standards in reading and writing. Although teachers are starting to use a wider range of teaching approaches, there are insufficient opportunities for students at Key Stage 3 to work in groups and the use of ICT in lessons is extremely limited. Teachers are very skilled in managing whole class discussions involving large numbers of students and teach spelling and punctuation well.

98 The school has a sensible and coherent action plan for improving standards of literacy which is starting to be implemented this academic year. In form periods students start the day with silent private reading. The school's policies on assessment and marking encourage a consistent and helpful approach when assisting students to improve their writing, although there is still a need to teach the different types of writing used across the curriculum. Speaking and listening skills are promoted across the curriculum with very good practice observed in languages lessons. In science students are taught specialist words which are displayed around the laboratories and in history and geography at Key Stages 3 and 4 they are encouraged to write extensively. In ICT students discuss ideas when using the Internet and boys, in particular, work hard on improving the presentation of their work when creating a web page. RE lessons encourage students to use a wide variety of resources in preparation for written work. There is a need to evaluate the readability levels of texts across the curriculum to ensure that low attaining students can understand them.

99 Since the last inspection standards of attainment have improved in English Literature and are consistent in English. Few students underachieve in this subject. All students including those with learning difficulties are set targets for improving their work. At Key Stage 3 staff need to continue to develop a wider range of teaching strategies and all students would benefit from greater access to ICT resources. The department was involved in a detailed review of its work in 1998 and this is starting to influence classroom practice in the teaching of language skills. The department is well managed and teachers are experienced and effective in classrooms. Resources for teaching are satisfactory and the high quality accommodation is well used. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

3 **Drama**

100 Drama is taught as a discrete subject to all students at Key Stage 3 and as an option at GCSE and A Level. Standards of achievement in lessons are above average for the majority throughout the school, and well above for a substantial number of students. All students at Key Stage 3 use language confidently and imaginatively to express their opinions and present arguments. They improvise with conviction presenting points of view convincingly even when these may not be their own. Year 9 have a good concept of the drama

Heroin Lies that they are studying and use it as a basis for building characterisation and exploring motivation. The majority of these students read fluently and expressively. Year 10 students present their Alan Pinter excerpts with conviction and understanding. Year 11 students work on the play 'Road'. Their performances presented one evening for parents and friends, revealed that they are very focused actors having a depth of maturity and understanding of this hard hitting drama and the social issues explored in it. Year 13 students presented a devised drama on 'school days' which was thoroughly researched and well prepared. Students make good progress in lessons as they clarify their roles. Existing skills show very good progress has been made over a period of time. GCSE results were well below average in 1998 when compared to national figures. However, in 1999 results were much better than this. This rising trend in attainment is borne out by observations. The few students taking A Level Theatre Studies achieve in line with expectations at this stage of their course.

101 At Key Stage 3 students are very enthusiastic about the subject, although at times, excitement overtakes a few. The subject matter frequently enthral them, however, and they remain involved beyond the classroom. At Key Stage 4 and at Post 16 enthusiasm is very focused and committed. Very strong relationships are evident in group work. Teaching is at least very good and in many aspects it is excellent. The pace in every lesson is very brisk with very challenging activities and ideas. A wide variety of strategies are used to enable students to explore many aspects of drama. Overall planning is excellent and the strong curriculum provides very good opportunities not only to study high quality drama, but to explore controversial, moral issues which enable students to clarify their own opinions and challenge their misconceptions and prejudices. Drama provides excellent opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

3 **Mathematics**

102 Overall standards of attainment in mathematics are average.

103 The attainment of students on entry to the school is slightly below the national average. At present students make good progress at Key Stage 3 so that by the end of the key stage their attainment is good. In the summer of 1999 the performance of students in national testing at the end of Year 9 was well above the national average, and was in line with schools with students from similar backgrounds. The performance of girls was much better than that of boys but boys were still above the national average.

104 Over the three years 1996 to 1998 the performance of boys was close to the national average and that of girls was above it. The results in 1999 showed strong improvement over those of the previous year and these good standards have been maintained. By the end of Key Stage 3 most students have developed some facility with the use of the four rules of number and can use a calculator for a range of straightforward operations. They can work with fractions, decimals and percentages, and are accustomed to the use of letters to represent numbers in algebra. They are familiar with a range of shapes in two and three dimensions, with angles and with symmetry. They can collect and tabulate data and represent it in a variety of suitable forms, and have been introduced to the concept of probability.

105 Good attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 provides students at present in Year 10 with a strong basis for their work in Key Stage 4. Those at present in Year 11 started from a lower base so that their work at present is average in standard overall. Standards reached by students in GCSE examinations in 1998 were very close to the national average, with the attainment of boys better than girls. Over the four years from 1996 to 1999 results declined in each successive year and by 1999 were rather below the national average in terms of the higher grades A*-C. However, results in terms of the full range of grades A*-G were well above the national average, with almost all students entered for the examination awarded a grade.

106 The present Year 11 is taking the examination by graduated assessment. The results of module tests taken during the course contribute to the final result. Coursework in the form of substantial investigative tasks also contributes to the final grade. Results were good last year and both the module test and the coursework

taking place during the inspection were very well organised. The present Year 10 will be offered the opportunity for early entry for GCSE in November of the year 2000. All these developments have been carefully considered by teachers in the mathematics department and implemented to raise standards at GCSE .

107 Post 16 students already follow a modular course. This includes the study of pure mathematics together with statistics and mechanics, and leads to A Level qualifications. Classes have been fairly small in recent years and the results obtained very variable, though below the national average overall. At present there are five students in the Year 13 group and eleven in the Year 12 group. Students in both groups are working well, making satisfactory progress with levels of attainment in line with the national average. Provision for A Level students is also being reconsidered. The time made available to them has been increased, and their course will be modified for future years in line with changes being made in provision for Post 16 students nationally.

108 Mathematics is an important tool in the study of a number of other subjects, and these subjects in their turn contribute to the study of mathematics. In mathematics itself excellent work is done at the end of Year 9 in relation to the Insight to Industry and Land Development projects. In science students have general mathematical competence in advance of expectation, with good skills of measurement and well developed graphical technique at Key Stages 3 and 4. They do not encounter problems with the complex calculations involved in calculating energy at A Level. In DT students show good skills of measurement, fitting and assembly, and develop good knowledge of structures at Key Stage 3. Good work is done in geography in collecting, manipulating and interpreting data, particularly for coursework. In business studies good use of graphs to represent data is made in the GCSE course; skills of numeracy needed for accounts and balance sheets meet the expectations for the GNVQ course.

109 On the whole students respond well to the opportunities offered to them and make good progress in lessons. They usually listen carefully to their teachers and pay attention to the work on the board or screen. They respond politely and usually accurately to direct questions. They apply themselves well to the work set for them and sustain concentration. They take care with handwriting and drawing. The presentation of their work is creditable except that dates and headings are often missing. Relationships between students are good, they co-operate well with each other when this is required. Behaviour is very good.

110 The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in almost all the lessons seen. It was good in the majority of lessons and very good in more than a quarter of the total. There was much very good teaching at Key Stage 4. Teachers have good subject knowledge, their exposition and board work is clear and accurate and their mathematical technique is good. Textbooks forming the basis of the scheme of work are good at all three key stages. There is a tendency to over-dependence on the textbook in some lessons but generally they are well used. Suitable homework is set. There is some variation in the standard of teachers' marking but the better examples are very good. Relationships between students and teachers are very good in most lessons, with very good support for the work of individuals by teachers and appreciation of this by students. In some lessons at Key Stage 3 the pace of the lesson was slowed by frequent interjections on the part of the teacher, causing problems for students in terms of maintaining the thread of their own thinking. Also insistence on teaching the group as a whole prevented the very different requirements of individual students across the wide range of ability from being met, even with a learning support assistant present.

111 The time allocated for the teaching of mathematics is good at Key Stage 3 and now also at Post 16. At Key Stage 4 it is in line with the national norm. The grouping of students is generally suitable in the context of the school. IEPs are in being for students with SEN; teachers have copies of these and the students concerned are well known to them. An excellent lesson was seen for students in a bottom set in Year 10 - students were using the Internet to research information on holidays and spreadsheets for setting out their findings and comparing them. ICT is used with this group in two lessons each fortnight - in other lessons the same group of students are prepared for examination entry by graduated assessment.

112 Overall much has been achieved since the last inspection to establish the conditions in which the teaching of the subject can become fully effective. The accommodation for mathematics is now good, as is grouping and time allocation. Resources for learning are suitable and good in quality, though there are too few textbooks for students at Key Stage 3 to take home. Attainment is now well above the national average by the

end of Key Stage 3, establishing a much better basis for examination work to follow. The take-up for the subject in Year 12 this year is good. Good attention is paid to the assessment and monitoring of students' progress, and good strategies are in place to prepare students effectively in terms of revision and practice for public examinations.

113 In order to make teaching more effective the department should seek to enhance the variety and interest of lessons and to raise the power and quality of student thinking and recall by:

- * enhancing the oral work of lessons, encouraging students to explain their reasoning at greater length, and to raise points of their own for consideration;
- * making more use of investigative approaches and practical work, including games, puzzles and challenging mental mathematics;
- * making more use of ICT in mathematical contexts to enhance the interest and relevance of the subject in a contemporary context;
- * making use of a greater range of techniques in teaching Key Stage 4 and Post 16 students, including individual, paired and group work to think through sequences of operations in new contexts, rather than relying solely on teacher demonstration and note-taking.

3 Science

114 By the end of each of Key Stages 3 and 4 attainment levels are above average. They are also above expectation in biology, chemistry and physics at Post 16. The results obtained in the 1998 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds were well above the national average for those gaining Level 5 and above and above for Level 6 and above. The results were in line with those of schools having similar proportions of students eligible for free school meals. The average level obtained was above the national level in 1998 and girls performed better than boys although over recent years boys have done slightly better than girls. The 1999 results improved and were well above the national average and those of similar schools. The 1998 GCSE results were above average with all entered obtaining at least a grade G. Boys performed slightly better than girls and all made significantly better progress in science, in comparison with national norms, than in their other subjects. The results were well above the national average for all 15 year olds and well above schools having students who performed similarly two years previously. The results in 1999 were similar to those in 1998 but the gender difference was reversed. The 1998 A Level results were in line with national averages in biology and above for those gaining A or B grades in physics and chemistry but below for those gaining at least an E grade. In 1999 the results improved in biology, were similar in chemistry and significantly lower in physics. Attainment has improved at all levels since the last inspection.

115 Students enter the school with levels of attainment which are close to average and their performance in subsequent public examinations is a clear indication of the good progress made. This is facilitated mainly by positive attitudes and very effective teaching. They acquire a good knowledge and a secure understanding of the subject matter in each of the attainment targets by the end of each key stage. In the first few weeks Year 7 students soon learn how to observe and measure accurately and record appropriately. A method of proven worth nationally has been introduced to accelerate development of thinking skills. In a Year 7 lesson where this method was used students, through their investigations in groups quickly discovered the need for and how to carry out a fair test. ICT skills develop well and students confidently access the Internet to obtain information on space and astronomy. Lower attainers in Year 9 construct food chains and webs and by the end of one lesson described how a poison is transmitted along a food chain. Most Year 9 students explain how day and year length are determined by planetary movements. Higher attainers use the particle mode to explain changes of state. The good progress continues through Key Stage 4 and Post 16 and over two lessons lower attaining Year 10 students planned an investigation and made sensible predictions. They ensured that the test was a fair one, obtained reliable results and evaluated and interpreted them. Year 11 students know the factors which affect rates of reactions and higher attainers explain the effects using collision theory. They understand electromagnetism, interpret speed-time graphs and calculate accelerations. Lower attainers describe the adverse effects of acid rain and burning fossil fuels. In one lesson A Level biology students rapidly acquired understanding of processes in the cell cycle and in another improved their examination techniques. Chemistry students interpret graphs of pH changes in reactions to choose a suitable indicator and those in Year 12 were able to apply Hess's Law to calculate energies by the end of a lesson. Those studying physics competently

handle calculations in mechanics and interpret graphs to further their understanding of black body radiation. Skills required in practical work develop to above expected levels by the end of each key stage. Students have the numeracy skills to process their experimental results which they present in various graphical forms. Students with special needs make the same good progress as others. This is brought about by good teaching, appropriate grouping arrangements, provision of suitable tasks and, in some lessons, by effective in-class support.

116 Students' attitudes to learning are very positive. They arrive promptly and well prepared for lessons and quickly settle. They listen carefully both to teachers and each other. They are willing to respond and put forward ideas, often at length, and apply their knowledge and understanding well when doing so. They co-operate very well in both small and larger groups working safely and productively without constant close supervision. Year 11 higher attainers confidently delivered presentations on environmental issues which they had prepared in teams. Students can be trusted to use expensive equipment carefully and they show proper respect for each others' work and displays. Attitudes to homework are good – students frequently spend more than the expected time in completing them. They respond positively to the comments made.

117 The quality of teaching is good overall and has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is always at least satisfactory and very good or excellent in almost half of lessons. It is particularly strong at Post 16. Teachers know their subject well and make it comprehensible to students at all levels of attainment. They are well aware of examination board requirements and use their knowledge well to improve examination techniques. They use contexts and resources familiar to students sometimes relating personal experiences which capture interest. Teachers know students particularly well and most use this knowledge to skilfully question students, draw out information and check understanding. Individuals become restless, however, when there is not enough teacher-student interaction or targeting of questions. Teachers have high expectations and use humour, encouragement and praise to promote a joint approach to success. Lessons are well planned with variety of activity and a good range of strategies although in one lesson the time allowed for the task was too long and the use of a task sheet would have avoided copying from the board. Support from both special needs staff and a trainee teacher is used effectively and both are well aware of the lesson content beforehand. Class management is very good and practical work is organised in a safe and orderly manner. Students are kept busy throughout. In an excellent lesson the objectives were made clear from the outset. A lively and enthusiastic approach with much student-teacher interaction drew out ideas which the teacher developed and sensitively corrected misconceptions. The students were then fully engaged working in pairs on a practical task which they found most challenging. The teacher, support assistant and newly qualified teacher gave additional assistance to individuals. A clear summary followed and students clearly understood what they had learned. Teachers set homeworks which often extend or reinforce work done in lessons and sometimes provide opportunities for students to develop their research skills. They are marked promptly with many informative comments which help students move forward.

118 The curriculum is planned well with good continuity aided by the effective liaison with the feeder schools. Assessment procedures are accurate and much use is made of the information obtained. It is planned to use it further in setting targets for individuals. There is now much more self-evaluation than at the last inspection. ICT is now used much more particularly for students to develop data capture and logging skills. Five of the seven teachers have been appointed since the last inspection. The technicians are well organised and efficient, providing valued support. All staff work hard as a team with a clear commitment to high standards and continuous improvement. The department is enthusiastically led and very effectively managed by a most competent head. Clear vision and a consultative and supportive approach are evident. The issues raised in the last inspection have been successfully addressed and the department is in a strong position to sustain improvements.

Art

119 On entry to the school students' attainment in art is generally satisfactory. Most have developed skills in painting and drawing and some have experience of three-dimensional work. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are very good. This is an improvement on the previous inspection report, when standards were satisfactory. There is now a consistency across both National Curriculum attainment targets and students' practical skill development which is matched by their knowledge of artists, and the artists' role in society. The basic skills of drawing are established early, as seen in a Year 7 class. Students learn about the softness and hardness of pencils and thoroughly explore the medium. They are able to describe uses for hard and soft points. Students' sketchbooks are used regularly and contain research on artists as well as practical work. Year 9 students study Picasso's 'Weeping Women' series; they convert their own observational drawings into cubist compositions. The range of practical work is varied and well balanced, it includes units of work that cover the main elements of art. There is evidence of study in line, colour, pattern, texture, tone and form. The schemes of work provide opportunities for students to develop skills in both two and three-dimensional art. Three-dimensional interpretations include the study of tribal masks during Year 8, where after researching the subject they create their own mask using card, papier mâché and paint. SEN students achieve good levels of attainment in art and are able to use the medium of art for observational study and self-expression.

120 At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are very good. GCSE examination results have improved each year since the last inspection and the percentage of students gaining the higher grades A*-C was significantly above the national average in 1998. The most recent results show a downturn. The standards observed during the inspection, however, are very good. In a Year 10 class the majority of students are achieving standards above the national expectation. They develop observation studies into repeated patterns using mirrors. The completed work includes mixed media interpretations using coloured thread, fabric and thick impasto paint. Students' knowledge of artists is demonstrated by individual study and their discussions. In Year 11 they base their own work on an in-depth analysis of an artist. Choices are wide and include artists such as Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse and Salvador Dali. One student based his work on George Grosz, demonstrating the power of art as satirical tool, in this instance as an attack on the rise of the Nazis. Finished drawings show that students at all levels are achieving high standards. All students have developed good and appropriate skills in the use of drawing, painting and three-dimensional modelling. The techniques of fabric printing remain undeveloped although the department is equipped with a fabric-printing table and screens.

121 Post 16 students' work is independent and there is a broad coverage of study. A Level results are slightly below the national average although the work of the present cohort is of a good standard. A Year 13 student demonstrates this quality in a study of fashion design; her sketchbooks are imaginative and adventurous. She makes use of modern cult hero's in the development of exciting designs. Three-dimensional study includes a Year 12 student's study of natural forms using clay. There is a good understanding of artists' work and students regularly visit art galleries and museums. This was evident during the inspection when the whole group visited a local gallery to view an exhibition and meet the artist. A weakness lies in not having access to photographic slides and projector for whole group discussion. Attainment has improved since the last inspection when students were achieving below average results.

122 There is very good progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4 and Post 16. Progress has been made since the last inspection when some students' learning was less effective when concentration was not sustained. Students' work folders, and classroom displays contain a range of good quality work which show a good and appropriate range of skills and understanding at each of the key stages. Students demonstrate an ability to plan their projects and collect information through the use of their sketchbooks. These are in continuous use for homework assignments and for planning course work. Teachers regularly monitor progress, as in Year 11, where homework is discussed mid-way through the assignment to ensure a successful completion of the work. Students at all levels are sufficiently challenged and folders show consistent progression in both attainment targets and the elements of art. SEN students make particularly good progress. Marking is consistent and the students are challenged through teachers written comments and effective day to day assessment. Many students use the facilities during lunchtimes and after school.

123 Students have a positive attitude to learning and enjoy art, they are attentive and well behaved. They maintain very good levels of concentration through double periods. They make full use of extra-curricular opportunities and regularly attend lunchtime lessons. The programme of visits, which includes an annual trip to Paris as a joint venture with the modern languages department, provides students with a good knowledge of art and its relevance to different cultures. Many Post 16 students gain places on foundation art courses. They are good role models for younger students.

124 The quality of teaching is a major strength of the department and has a direct influence on student achievement. The department benefits from good and effective leadership. Schemes of work are meticulously planned, broad in their coverage and provide stimulating tasks for students. Records are thorough and include photographic evidence of students' work over many projects. Classroom displays are varied and educational, they provide an excellent resource for learning. There is a good pace in lessons and different teaching strategies are employed to meet various learning requirements. Assessment, reporting and recording procedures are very effective in informing students of their progress and setting future targets, although, as yet, they do not include a opportunities for student self-assessment. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

125 Resources for learning provide stimulus for ideas which include a good collection of art reference books. Students use the Internet for research. The Acorn computers are not powerful enough to meet the requirements of the department. There is a need to make more effective use of the equipment within the department including the dark room facilities and fabric printing resources.

3

3

Design and Technology

126 At the end of Key Stage 3, overall standards of attainment are mainly good. Teachers' assessment indicates that most students achieve the expected National Curriculum level and girls achieve more higher grade passes than boys. Standards of attainment are good in Year 7 resistant materials where students use graphics to draw simple geometric shapes. They understand how isometric drawing can communicate accurate technical information to others. Students are competent at solving technological problems, for example Year 9 students investigate structures and then design and build bridges. They use simple materials to find out how forces such as compression and tension, act upon different types of structures. The recent review of schemes of work has introduced a range of challenging tasks and projects. This is evident in food technology where Year 7 students research and develop recipes. They are taught the basic skills of cooking pasta, rice, cous-cous and bulgar wheat as focused practical tasks and apply this knowledge when creating their own recipe. Standards of attainment are below the national norm in textiles where students have too little opportunity to develop their own designs. This is evident in Year 8, where students' folders contain too few examples of creative and investigative work. Overall, there is a clear improvement since the last inspection when a number of students were underachieving.

127 The proportion of students obtaining passes at grades A*-C in GCSE in DT were well below national averages in 1998. They improved significantly in 1999. Standards of attainment are good in food technology where students achieve above average GCSE results in the higher grades. In the lessons observed, students are able to work independently and create imaginative dishes. In Year 11, students develop a basic quiche recipe into one of their own. They vary the ingredients and balance flavours and textures, for example, smoked salmon with prawn and spicy sausage with broccoli. Standards are broadly in-line with the national average in GCSE engineering and resistant materials. The present cohort in engineering are working above the national average. They are able to design clamping devices using a compressed air and valve system. In resistant materials, standards are broadly in-line with the national average, making and construction skills are good, but designing skills are below average. Over the past two years limited options have been offered for DT and only 60% of Year 11 and 37% of Year 10 students take DT. The full range of attainment is not represented in these two years. This arrangement does not meet statutory requirements and affects standards. Standards have improved generally since the last inspection when students spent too much time on improving the presentation of the work.

128 At Key Stage 3 progress is very good. Well-planned modules ensure a balanced progression in design and making skills. Progress is consistent across all levels of attainment. There is evidence of an upturn in the quality of work. This is supported by the positive attitudes of students. The recently re-written schemes of work provide real challenge to Key Stage 3 students. There is a more collaborative approach to problem solving with students working in teams and coming to joint decisions. This is evident in both mechanisms and structures modules where projects include challenging problem solving components. In food, younger students work independently and complete a recipe within the lesson. Opportunities for developing patterns and working independently are less well developed in textiles. Homework is regular and an integral part of the work. SEN students make particularly good progress and there is good individual support for selected students during DT activities. DT teachers are supportive; they provide individual attention and work with SEN staff in providing an appropriate and challenging curriculum. At Key Stage 4, students make good progress during their examination courses. The courses available to them provide opportunities to learn the skills of information seeking and problem solving and they are able to produce practical design solutions. Learning across the disciplines of DT has become more inter-related since the last inspection. This is most effective in resistant materials and engineering where students gain from the experience of individual teachers, for example, computing. Key Stage 4 GCSE engineering provides breadth and opportunity and supports progress of students who are practically orientated although there is limited development of portfolio work and design opportunities. SEN students are particularly well supported in the faculty and make good progress at Key Stage 4. Overall progress has improved since the last inspection, particularly during Key Stage 3. Marking and assessment procedures are now much stronger and support the improvement in progress.

129 Attitudes to learning are very good. Students settle quickly to tasks and maintain concentration through lessons. They are able to express themselves clearly, they interact well with each other and with their teachers. Students develop maturity and confidence as they progress through each of the key stages and, by the latter stages of Key Stage 4, and in Post 16 classes, they are able to work independently on a wide range of challenging projects and tasks. Behaviour is very good.

130 The quality of teaching is mainly good and rarely less than satisfactory. In the lessons where teaching is very good, teachers are well qualified and have an in-depth command of their subject. Lessons are well-planned, appropriate resources are used and students are well managed. Clear objectives are set which ensure students build on previous skills and understanding in their work. This was evident in Year 10 food technology, where students were required to make a time plan for the lesson. They used equipment properly and with an understanding of safety requirements. Very good teaching is observed in those lessons where teachers make good use of open-ended questioning and provide challenge through problem solving techniques. It is less than satisfactory in lessons where there is a predominance of directed tasks and where students do not gain the opportunity to develop their own ideas. This was seen in textiles where students spent a whole lesson learning the basics of using a sewing machine. Key Stage 3 schemes of work have been reviewed recently. They are broad and balanced and meet the developmental needs of students, an improvement on the last inspection. Assessment procedures are thorough and students' progress is constantly monitored. However, there is no provision for students to consider the quality of their own development through self-assessment. There has been a considerable progress in the quality of the teaching since the previous report when assessment criteria did not relate closely enough to the National Curriculum.

131 Leadership of the faculty is effective. It is efficiently managed and well led. The appointment of subject leaders for resistant materials and food and textiles has resulted in the recent development of schemes of work. Relationships throughout the faculty are good. The department benefits from good technician support. Accommodation is mainly very good although further provision for food technology is planned. The quality of display within the department is good. The department has made significant improvements at Key Stage 3 and good improvement at Key Stage 4. The school must provide a full range of National Curriculum experiences in-line with statutory requirements. The department suffers from having no provision for graphic products during Key Stage 4 which has an effect on the standards of design and presentation of students' work. Good use is made of the ICT provision within the department. The department has the potential to make further progress.

Geography

132 Students arrive in the school with varied experiences of geography. Students make good progress in geography and, by the end of Key Stage 3, have an emerging core of geographical knowledge. They develop the skills needed to harness that knowledge effectively, are competent in their use of geographical terminology, have a reasonable idea of place and location, and attainment broadly in line with the expectations set by the National Curriculum. The relatively few students who continue geography into Key Stage 4 make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. In 1998, 52.5% achieved GCSE grades A*-C against a national average of 51.5% but with few high grades, typical performances slightly below grades achieved in other subjects and girls outperforming boys in line with national trends. These results are typical of recent years with results in geography rising roughly in line with improvements in national performance. Results in 1999 were better than those of 1998. Geographical knowledge is acquired around the requirements of the GCSE syllabus and students at this stage have a broader and more detailed geographical knowledge especially of aspects of physical geography, use terminology with reasonable proficiency and are competent in interpretational and representational skills. Year 11 students recall their experiences in the subject with satisfaction. A Level Geography has attracted few students. In 1998, all four A Level geography candidates passed. Students generally write their own notes and are precise in applying geographical knowledge and skills, selective in their use of information and confident in manipulating it. They demonstrate good investigative skills in testing out hypotheses. They make satisfactory progress.

133 The report of the previous inspection referred to GCSE results above national averages in 1994 but A Level results which were poor. In addition there was a number of criticisms of teaching and resourcing. A Level results are now much improved. Techniques of differentiation are increasingly understood and deployed to foster more effective learning across the ability range. Assessment is now much more consistent and does give pointers to personal improvement. Accommodation has been transformed. There has been considerable progress but much of it is recent, reflecting very significant changes to staffing at the start of this term. The department is in a period of transition and its new strengths are not yet reflected in examination results and take up rates.

134 The quality of teaching is now very high and succeeds because it is characterised by great diversity in organisational styles both within lessons and through courses. This helps pacing and sustains interest, by appropriate expectation of students, by the insistence on positive behaviour and by attention to detail with careful revision of earlier work. There is a real awareness of and a wide range of appropriate strategies to accommodate the wide range of attainment in classes. A lively Year 10 class, for example, was quickly and competently brought onto task and enjoyed a lesson on flooding which had clear aims and objectives and was built around solid traditional teaching with ad hoc blackboard diagrams supporting well focused question and answer sessions. Tasks were differentiated and very good progress was made by all. A Year 9 class used textbooks imaginatively and were ably steered into a discovery of the characteristics of Brazilian favelas. Another group reached similar conclusions by building their own shanty town in miniature. For a Year 7 class, earlier work on distance, direction and grid references anticipated a lesson on latitude and longitude which served also to strengthen knowledge of place and location on a global scale. Such variety and strategies are consciously deployed to enhance understanding and geographical awareness. Lessons are well planned. Good ideas are shared. Marking is thorough and consistent and there are good arrangements for self-assessment. Homework is well used, sometimes to introduce a new topic. This term's work is, in general, significantly more secure than earlier work and is a testimony to the effectiveness of current teaching.

135 Students generally show interest in their work and usually tackle it with vigour and enthusiasm. They are relaxed in oral contributions and show no reticence in responding to question and answer sessions. At other times, they contribute suggestions, volunteer answers and ask questions willingly reflecting the strength of student teacher relationships. Students are courteous, polite and respect the environment in which they learn. The standard of presentation of written work is high. GCSE and A Level coursework, in particular, show a willingness by students to work in depth, with accuracy and interest, to show initiative and to accept responsibility for their own progress. Such coursework is varied and interesting, detailed and thoughtfully conceived, neatly presented and of a very high standard.

3 136 The humanities faculty gives a strong lead but, in order to harness the teaching team's many strengths, to give even more focus to their commitment, to explore ICT and fieldwork and to give even greater sense of direction, the department needs a subject specialist co-ordinator.

3

3 **History**

137 The quality of teaching has been maintained since the last report and continues to be generally good. It is more variable in the Post 16 programmes than in the other key stages. Many effective elements contribute to overall quality. Lessons are based on clear schemes of work, which match the requirements of the National Curriculum or the examination syllabuses. Teachers generally have a good command of the subject and are able to respond to questions and include interesting detail. This adds interest and creates a sense of the spirit of the times. In a Year 7 lesson about the feudal system, technical terms were explained in a clear and humorous manner. Lesson objectives are made explicit on the board at the start of the lesson. Sometimes the end of the lesson is marked by a short oral review to summarise how many have been achieved. Staff have clear and generally appropriate expectations for the range of attainment in the mixed groups. Sometimes higher attainers could be challenged by more demanding objectives, particularly at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the course-work in Years 10 and 11. SEN students receive good support. Worksheets contain graduated tasks, which help all students to gain from the lesson. Teachers take pains to include all students in oral sessions and value their contributions. Staff use a range of resources. Video material is deployed effectively to stimulate and inform. In one Post 16 lesson on the general strike, video material aroused strong empathy and encouraged comparison of past conditions with modern circumstances. Homework is carefully planned as a complement to the lesson. Homework encourages independent research, albeit within a framework provided by the teacher. Work is fully assessed using the agreed marking systems and students know how well they are doing through results of assessment tasks, which target knowledge and skills. Lessons are well paced and there is generally a good balance between teacher explanation and classroom tasks. Questioning is usually effective with some use of target questions to draw oral responses from a wider range of students. In some Post 16 lessons, where students make presentations of their research investigations, they should be encouraged to use handouts or bullet point summaries on the overhead projector, rather than dictating information.

138 Students' attitudes are generally good and sometimes very good indeed. Most behave very well and are willing to follow classroom routines and manners. They listen to the teachers and to each other. They work well in pairs and small groups. They usually maintain concentration, even at the end of a long day. Most volunteer responses and are confident enough to speak out before their classmates. Sometimes they become over excited or chatty but soon settle. They respond well to the courtesy shown by their teachers.

139 Most students make sound or better progress in all year groups. There are clear gains in knowledge and in appreciation of time and sequence of events during Key Stage 3. Students are aware of the importance of sources and appreciate that information from the past can take many forms. Time allocated to history in Key Stage 3 is slightly below national norms and this limits the scope of in-depth study. The skills of interrogating sources are, therefore, less well developed than they should be by the end of the essential stage. Most students learn that all sources are important to the historian. Many students learn that some are more reliable than others. Higher attainers become quite adept at selecting and combining information to present a narrative of events. They do this well as part of the GCSE course-work project on the local church. They are less confident when asked to evaluate the significance of events described in contemporary sources in the context of the hypothesis they are attempting to prove. Post 16 students improve their research skills, often using sources which extend those provided by the teacher. A brainstorming session in preparation for an exam on historical perspectives showed good lateral thinking in the context of this country but less confidence in cross referencing to events abroad.

140 Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is just above the national expectation. Observation in lessons and scrutiny of work generally confirms that teachers are making reasonably valid though slightly generous judgements in the end of key stage assessments. Key Stage 3 attainment would be strengthened further by a greater focus on teaching students to look critically at historical sources, including pictures and artefacts as well as written material. Attainment in Key Stage 4 is also just above average. GCSE examination performance

has fluctuated over the past four years. In 1998, although all candidates secured a grade, attainment at A*-C was just below the national average. Following a detailed review of course work procedures, results in 1999 improved dramatically. All candidates secured a grade and 73% achieved A*-C grades. Girls did better than boys at the higher levels, mirroring national trends. This fluctuation in examination attainment reflects the differing balance of attainment in groups of students opting to study history each year. Post 16 attainment is largely in line with the national average. Achievement at the highest A/B grades is usually below national averages but the subject has a consistently good record of all students securing a pass grade. The strongest results in the last three years were in 1998 when the average points score was in line with national average. In 1999 this dipped sharply, although all students passed the examination. When set against prior attainment however, these results show good progress.

141 History is managed as one of a broad portfolio of subjects within the humanities faculty. There is good team work, thoughtful leadership and effective development planning. Examination attainment is evaluated and teaching and learning programmes adjusted. Teacher expertise is deployed effectively across the key stages and good use is made of time and resources. There is, however, no specific, formal delegation of responsibility for the subject with clear lines of accountability for syllabus development, standardisation of assessment for instance. All members of the history team have other major responsibilities in the school. The establishment of clear lines of responsibility would help the head of faculty to manage the subject through delegation to achieve agreed targets.

142 The positive features noted in the last report have been maintained and there has been some improvement in standards at the end of the key stages. There is enhanced use of examination data and increasingly, teachers are using externally developed data projections as a way of assessing the value they add. Further development is required to make use of the attainment information to set individual targets for students in line with the next stage in the school development plan.

3

Information Communication Technology

143 Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are very good and above the national average. They are higher than reported at the time of the last inspection. A majority of students are above average when assessed against National Curriculum Levels. Girls achieve standards higher than boys although the gap is not significant. The foundation course provides a sound grounding in the necessary skills and applications of ICT. Students master the use of keyboard and mouse effectively and apply these skills in a wide range of activities. These include word-processing skills, desk top publishing, compiling data for databases, constructing spreadsheets, using computer graphics and use of the Internet. In a Year 7 class students wrote a description of themselves and their favourite pastimes to E-mail to a student from another country. All projects are relevant and motivating as in a Year 8, where students research and plan holiday packages through the Internet. During the key stage students gain the experience of applying their ICT skills within subjects across the school curriculum. For example, in humanities where research is conducted through the Internet and in science where students use 'Crocodile Clips' software to simulate circuit design. Statutory requirements for ICT are fully met.

144 At Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are very good. The most recent examination results show students achieve results in the higher grades significantly above the national average. There has been a consistent improvement in results since the GCSE course was introduced following the last inspection. Projects are creative and capture students' imagination. This was seen in Year 10, where students use PowerPoint software to build a web site. They sequence words and images in a storyboard format. In Year 11 students take part in video conferencing, for example when they connected and conversed with 'Father Christmas' in Finland. Cross-curricular applications are consistent across all subjects and evidenced in Year 10 and 11 project folders. In the technology and science departments ICT applications are in regular use. Word-processing and desktop publishing are effectively used in most subjects, as are graphic applications for charts and graphs. Standards of attainment have improved since the last inspection when worksheets did not provide sufficiently imaginative tasks to engage students' interest. Key Stage 4 statutory requirements for curriculum coverage are fully met.

145 At Post 16, A Level students are confident and capable. Year 12 students are able to work independently on a simulated task. They construct a database to record and provide information on the income and expenditure of a group of five parishes. GNVQ students make full use of the ICT resources and project folders show regular and varied uses of ICT applications, such as graphs, charts, database construction and research through the Internet. Use of ICT at Post 16 has been increased since the last inspection, when A Level entry was small and few achieved higher grades. This situation has now been remedied.

146 At Key Stage 3 students' progress is very good, it is monitored through the regular marking of coursework and effective assessment procedures. All students are aware of their own attainment level and know what they need to do to improve. At the last inspection no formal assessment of students' skills was carried out and there were no records of National Curriculum attainment. This has now been fully addressed and assessment procedures within the department are strong and play a major role in promoting good progress. Homework is regularly set and students are keen to complete the tasks set them. Extra-curricular provision at lunch time and after school provides opportunities for all students to improve their computer skills. SEN students make very good progress, they are set specific tasks and ICT is used regularly in their work. At Key Stage 4 and in Post 16 courses, students' progress is very good and is monitored through assessment procedures relevant to their courses. There has been an improvement since the last inspection when documentation was sparse and schemes of work did not adequately support the curriculum. There is now evidence of the use and development of good ICT skills in most curriculum areas.

147 Students' attitudes towards ICT are excellent. They enjoy ICT and are attentive, they concentrate on their work and are well behaved. Students make full use of the extra-curricular opportunities provided and use the computer rooms during lunch times and after school. All students respect the departmental policy of providing open access to the computer rooms. Students are collaborative when working in groups and co-operate well at all times when working in the ICT computer rooms as, for example in Year 12, where GNVQ students work together during free periods. ICT is a popular subject in the school and relationships between students and teachers are very good.

148 Teaching is mainly very good and on occasions it is outstanding. Specialist ICT teachers' subject knowledge is excellent. They work hard to construct tasks and projects that present stimulating and exciting challenges to students. Teachers' expectations are high and students are required to work with good pace. Lessons have clear objectives. Teachers use good learning strategies, including well considered questioning techniques. The ICT department benefits from strong and effective leadership and is supported by a well-qualified and enthusiastic technician. There is considerable improvement in the quality and scope of teaching since the last inspection. The department has a sound development plan and all documentation is of a high standard. Cross-curricular use is broad and subject teachers make full use of the available resources.

149 The ratio of students per computer is equal to the national average and they are of a good quality. The department makes good and efficient use of resources. The school enjoys excellent relationships with local industries, and overseas contacts for E-mail and video conferencing communication. The department represents a strength within the school and evidence suggests that it will continue to improve in the future.

3 **Modern Foreign Languages**

150 By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in French and German is mostly above expectations. In most lessons students understand and react appropriately to the teacher's instructions in the foreign language. They enjoy success at comprehension of native speakers on tape, especially where this is carefully prepared and exploited. Many students, including low attainers and those with SEN, speak the foreign language competently using prelearnt phrases to describe themselves, their family and interests. Higher attainers in Year 9 can adapt language to form new sentences and are beginning to describe actions in the past with increasing confidence. In a Year 9 French lesson, for example, students were able to locate rooms in a house using complex prepositions that required adapting, and made themselves understood in well pronounced French.

151 Standards by the end of Key Stage 4 remain higher than expected in both languages. GCSE results at grades A*-C in 1997 and 1998 were well above national averages for both girls and boys. Girls' results exceeded those of boys, but by a smaller margin than nationally. In 1999 the majority of students took French at GCSE and more than fifty percent gained a pass at grade C or above. The outstanding results of German students, of whom ninety-three percent gained passes at C or above and nearly a third achieved grades A* or A, lifted the overall languages figures to well above the national average for previous years. These strong GCSE results should also be seen in the light of the school's policy of entering all but a very small number for at least one language. Attainment in lessons in Key Stage 4 is more variable than in Key Stage 3. Highest attaining students of German in Year 11 are undertaking demanding work involving them in producing advertising slogans. Students ask and answer questions naturally in well accented German, many speaking with emphasis and expression. Middle and lower attainers have sound standards of speaking and reading. Standards of written work, although very high in some cases, will need to be improved overall if more students, especially those of French, are to achieve the top grades at GCSE.

152 At Post 16 standards in French are well in line with expectations. In German they are better than expected. At A Level numbers have not been large enough to compare usefully with national figures, but results in recent years have shown a strong pattern. Four out of the seven language students in 1999 gained a grade C or above; two of these achieved grade A. Year 13 students of German have a good grasp of complex topical issues spoken at native speed, and express themselves readily using idiomatic and accurate German.

153 Progress of students at Key Stage 3 is mostly above expectations. This applies equally to low attainers and students with SEN who make good headway in their foreign language, particularly in speaking. Progress is largely responsive to the quality of teaching and is at its strongest where teaching allows abundant opportunity for students to take an active part in their own learning through frequent practice and good repetition. In one Year 8 German lesson a group of low attaining students, including seven with SEN, made significant gains in their capacity to talk about their family. The teaching strongly promoted active participation, and, by giving open-ended tasks, allowed all students to succeed. Towards the end of the key stage girls make faster progress than boys overall, especially in the skills of reading and writing.

154 At Key Stage 4 the majority of students continue to make good progress. The faculty's consistently strong results with low attaining students in recent years testify to the good gains they make and the appropriate teaching they receive. Progress can be hindered at times, however, by the disaffection of a few students, principally boys, who respond adversely to teaching that lacks rigour or challenge. At Post 16 progress of all students is at least sound, though in German it is better than expected. Students make best progress where they are actively challenged and encouraged to participate, having to formulate opinions and defend their arguments in lively debate.

155 At all three stages most students are very well disposed to the learning of foreign languages. They show enthusiasm for their work, eagerness to respond to questions and a readiness to involve themselves fully. Behaviour overall is exemplary; inattentiveness is rare and generally results from occasional lapses in the pace and rigour of teaching. Many students show signs of good independent study habits and work reliably unsupervised. Coursework at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 level, for example, is often well researched in the foreign language using the Internet and other authentic sources. Many use ICT to word process and illustrate their finished written work.

156 The quality of teaching is good or better in five out of ten lessons; in three out of ten it is very good or outstanding. Teaching is satisfactory in the remainder. There is much very good teaching in German. All teachers have a secure grasp of their languages; in some cases this is exceptional and leads to a very sensitive use of the language in the classroom with imaginative strategies to avoid translating into English. The benefits of consistent use of the foreign language are evident in students' good comprehension, their commendable accent and pronunciation and the speed with which they respond to instructions. In the rare cases where the language is used seldom or inconsistently, students' confidence in speaking and listening is less secure.

157 A good proportion of teaching is challenging. The pace of work is brisk but thorough; new language is systematically drilled and rehearsed; students are kept busy and involved; a rigorous working ethos prevails.

In such cases standards of attainment and progress are well above expectations. A strength of much of the teaching is the often imaginative use of methods and resources to stimulate interest. An example of this is the clear statement of objectives at the start of the lesson, and, in some cases, a brief check at the end that these have been achieved. Teachers manage students skilfully, treating them with respect and good humour. Potential difficulties are usually avoided by good planning and forethought. Homework is set regularly and well marked with encouraging comments but should require the students to make corrections.

158 Against a strong background there are a few areas where teaching could be further improved. Ends of lessons should be less rushed to allow time to wind down, set homework and dismiss in an orderly way. Repetition and pairwork activities need to be more systematic, with careful preparation for pairwork and individual as well as collective repetition when practising new language. Some students, particularly those of French in Key Stage 4, should be more extended at times by giving them open-ended tasks and encouraging them to read freely in the foreign language. Listening tapes should be used more effectively as an instrument of teaching as well as testing comprehension. In spite of the faculty's good initiatives to get students to make simple requests in the language, more could be done to insist on its use in the classroom.

159 Very good arrangements are in place in Year 9 for the setting of students according to attainment. This allows teachers to suit their methods more precisely to students' individual needs, and to take one group of lower attainers from the second language programme to concentrate on their first language. In Year 8, however, these arrangements do not apply. Placing students in two year cohorts of unequal size prevents appropriate setting by attainment and restricts the faculty in its ability to withdraw certain students from the second language. At Key Stage 3 the allocation of time to the first language, at around seven percent of curriculum time, is less than the national average for all secondary schools (ten percent). This creates difficulties in covering the syllabus and finding time for extension work such as free reading. Several groups in Key Stage 3 also have gaps of up to a week between lessons. This does not encourage the highest standards, especially with students who have limited short term recall.

160 The foreign languages faculty enjoys very strong innovative leadership and the hard work of a dedicated team of professionals, including French and German language assistants. Documentation is both clear and effective, as are the faculty's financial and development plans. There should now be greater focus on two initiatives for raising standards in the future: setting targets for underperforming students in Key Stage 4 and benefiting further from the use of ICT for motivating students. The longstanding programme of visits and exchanges in Germany and France continues to provide students with excellent linguistic and cultural opportunities. The faculty's resources and accommodation overall contribute to high standards. However, one member of staff teaches French in a non-specialist room with no access to audio-visual equipment or displays in French. This is currently unsuitable for the teaching of foreign languages and does not promote best practice.

161 Since the last inspection the foreign languages faculty has taken effective steps to maintain and improve upon good standards. A Level results have improved and numbers of students taking two languages at GCSE remain strong. The foreign language is used at all stages as part of classroom communication. Planning for the short and long term has now become an integral part of the faculty's practice. The faculty has everything in place to continue making improvements.

3 Music

162 The level of attainment in music is above average. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is average for the vast majority. Students in Year 7 sing with confidence and good tone. When singing together in unison they sing with very good intonation although this suffers a little when singing in two parts. However the parts are maintained well and confidently, showing good awareness of other performers. Call and response exercises in Year 7 are prompt and alert, and well led by some of the students who have sufficient confidence to exploit changes of pitch, volume and speed. Ensemble work is also evident in taped examples of students' work in Years 8 and 9. Using a variety of instruments they perform music in groups, maintaining a satisfactory beat and ensemble. Year 9 students perform their own remixes of songs. These examples also demonstrate that

they can develop musical ideas. Year 8 students compose music for the 'Who killed Cock Robin' rhyme, which show an ability to use different textures and imaginative combinations of instruments and sometimes even combinations of different keys. Year 7 students, in their vocal project, exploit musical elements of pitch and volume. Year 8 students explore interesting and unusual chords as the basis for a composition. One or two students successfully create unusual sequences of chords, but this aspect also provides some with problems hearing their chords in sequence as they are more difficult to play. There are insufficient computers with appropriate software and keyboards to enable large classes at Key Stage 3 to make use of this valuable tool for composition. This inhibits progress in this essential area. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. With smaller classes students begin to make good use of computer technology for composition. This has a positive effect on their achievement at this level as it enables them to hear and amend immediately. Students in Year 10 compose using an ostinato technique and Year 11 students are now beginning to complete their portfolio of compositions, many of which are imaginative, well constructed and sensitive to style. Year 11 students also perform well. A student playing the electric guitar plays very expressively to a high standard. Good examples of performance are heard from students playing the saxophone, flute and a creditable performance from a beginner guitarist. Students at this level talk knowledgeably about their music making. They listen critically and attentively to their own and others' performances. They appreciate the criteria for playing a piece of music well. Comments are informed and they use musical terminology with confidence. The criteria for examination assessment are well known. The level of attainment at Post 16 depends on individual attainment and experience of the students choosing the subject. At present the small numbers of students in Years 12 and 13 are above average. Compositions are well structured, demonstrate a good grasp of compositional techniques such as using coding devices for names, in imitation of Ravel, and students talk very knowledgeably and articulately about what they are trying to achieve. The Year 13 student in revising her composition from a year ago demonstrates what good progress she has made in the intervening time.

163 Students arriving from primary schools with varying experiences of music, make good progress to establish a common ground. This is because of enthusiastic teaching and challenging tasks. Progress through the key stage is effected by sequential activities in lessons and good assessment in which the students are involved. Students with SEN make good progress with materials and tasks designed for them and with careful and individual support from teachers and support staff. Self-esteem also aids progress for these students when they realise how successful they can be in a practical environment. At all stages, musically able students make good progress in class because of specially designed materials to extend them. Good instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities of very good quality also assist their progress. Current strategies to monitor the progress and achievement of such students are promising. The addition of two practice rooms has had a beneficial effect on progress in individual and group work. However, the use of the small mobile classroom inhibits progress because there is insufficient room for meaningful practical work. Although the department has improved the number of instrumental resources the electronic keyboards with small keys still limits progress for those that use them.

164 Levels of attainment are borne out by statutory teacher assessments and by examination results. 1999 was the first year that the school produced attainment figures for Key Stage 3. Although fewer students work beyond the expectations than recognised nationally, these show that the majority of students are achieving the end of key stage statements. Particularly commendable is the fact that far fewer students are achieving below the expectations, than nationally. GCSE results in 1998 were above average when compared to all schools nationally with 86% of students gaining A*-C compared with a national figure of 64.7%. All students gained a grade between A* and G. 1999 results were not quite so good with 81.5% of students achieving grades A*-C, but these reflected the wider spread of attainments of the greater number of students taking the examination. No students took the A Level examination in 1999, but two students gained an A grade in 1998 and two music technology students gained Bs. Numbers of students taking the examination are too small to make comparisons with national figures worthwhile.

165 Students' attitudes to music are very good. Throughout the school students are very enthusiastic about music. At Key Stage 3 they are keen to play instruments and sing. At Key Stage 4 they are opting for the subject at GCSE level in larger numbers. They are dedicated and mature. In Years 12 and 13 they talk about their compositions with enthusiasm and confidence. During performances at all levels, they show a high degree of concentration and this is particularly evident during choir and band rehearsals. Behaviour is excellent; students are courteous to each other, to their teachers and to visitors to the school. They treat each

other and the equipment they use with great care and respect. During group work they collaborate very well, showing respect for each others feelings, and demonstrating the quality of the relationships in the school. There are many examples of students taking the initiative to start and lead various performance groups in their own time. The A Cappella choir is an excellent example of this.

166 Teaching is very good. It has some excellent qualities. Teachers are very good practising musicians and directors and in this they provide excellent role models for the students. They provide very good challenge in a variety of ways. Tasks are demanding but appropriate for differing abilities. The pace of many lessons is brisk and teachers challenge students to achieve a high level of performance in all practical music activities. Lessons are always well planned, and activities and strategies in lessons are sequential, enabling students to progress determinedly to their goals. Strong and caring relationships with students means that management of behaviour in the classroom is excellent. They handle all the equipment and resources with great confidence and familiarity. Teachers assess students' work regularly, using excellent documentation, which has grown out of need and experience. This is easy to use and greatly appreciated by students, as it allows them jointly with their teacher to set targets for their work, and provides an excellent record of their progress. This is beginning to have a positive impact on progress, as is the on-going revision of the curriculum, which provides students with more opportunities to play and work in groups. Homework is set appropriately especially at GCSE and A Level.

167 The department is exceptionally well led, by the head of the expressive arts faculty. The review held during the inspection demonstrated the dedication and expertise of all staff, and their commitment to long term planning which has greatly improved since the last inspection. Also evident was the high level of support given by the management team of the school which has a very positive effect on all areas of the faculty. Instrumental lessons are lively and demanding. The wide variety of extra-curricular activities including choirs, orchestras and bands is of a very good standard. A musical, this year 'Return to the Forbidden Planet', and a cross-curricular arts week alternate annually. Music provides a very stimulating and enriching experience for the students of the school.

3

Physical Education

3 168
attainment are broadly average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.

Overall standards of

169 At the end of Key Stage 3, in games, both girls and boys display sound standards of personal fitness. In basketball most girls can move effectively with the ball under control, though a few have problems with basic ball skills. In soccer most boys show a good understanding of the principles of support play and many have sufficiently well developed skills in finding space and passing. Within the key stage, in some classes, there are a significant number of students who are below the expected standards. In mixed gender dance and health related exercise groups, both boys and girls, do not match the levels reached in single gender groups in many other schools. By the end of Key Stage 4, levels of personal fitness are higher and the skills of many students are good. This is particularly the case in boys' soccer and in mixed badminton. In netball, although there are skilled individual players, the standard of teamwork is more variable. In examination classes there is a wide range of attainment. In Year 10 for example there are students who have a good knowledge of the components of fitness and can draw on their own personal experience to illustrate this. However, there are also those students who have weaknesses in the theoretical aspects of the subject. The average points score of students entered for GCSE in 1998 was in line with the national average. Results improved in 1999. At A Level, in the newly introduced sports studies course, the most recent results are encouraging and currently most students have reached a good standard, especially in theory work.

170 Progress in PE is always at least satisfactory overall though it does not match the rate of many other subjects in the school. Levels of progress in some mixed gender classes at Key Stage 3, notably dance, are not satisfactory. Some boys are self-conscious, the behaviour of a few and their motivation is not good and they have a disruptive effect on others. In some classes in Year 7, however, progress in dance is good with students

of all levels of attainment already establishing and sustaining rhythm patterns and becoming better at devising and repeating inventive sequences. The progress made in Key Stage 4 is better, especially in traditional games where much of the teaching has been in single gender groups. Post 16 students in the sports leadership course are gaining a sound understanding of leadership qualities and at A Level the progress made in deepening both knowledge and understanding of the factors affecting reaction time is very good. Students with SEN in all years progress well especially in the earlier years as they gain confidence by reaching improved levels of performance.

171 The response of those who regularly participate in PE is consistently positive. They show interest in their work and sustain high levels of concentration over long periods of time. Most have the ability to work well in a variety of settings, individually, in pairs and in small groups. Relationships amongst students are good as is the relationship between students and their teachers. The majority are polite, helpful and able to answer questions confidently. The department already recognises the degree to which non-participation is a problem. This, together with a small number of students, mainly boys in Key Stage 3, who disrupt lessons through silliness, is currently affecting progress and the quality of learning for all.

172 The quality of teaching is consistently good, occasionally very good or outstanding. There is much very good teaching Post 16. All specialist teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of activities, especially in examination classes. Teachers plan thoroughly and organise the activities of the lessons well making excellent use of the specialist facilities and resources for learning. Newly qualified teachers plan their lessons very thoroughly. In most lessons tasks set are clearly explained and targets for development carefully identified. There is clear sensitivity to the needs of all students. In some lessons more attention should be devoted to highlighting ways to improve through more emphasis on paired work and on enabling partners to observe and evaluate each other's performance.

173 At present sustaining the quality and consistency of teaching is made more difficult by inconsistencies in the timetabling and grouping arrangements. A thorough review is now being used to determine how best to resolve organisational problems which affect the pace of progress in PE. It should include a review of the timetable to secure a more even distribution of time for PE for some groups and should reconsider whether mixed gender activities enable all students to make good progress and reach high standards. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements and appropriate arrangements for assessment are in place. The day-to-day activities of the PE department are well managed and run smoothly. Specialist accommodation is good with strong links between the school and the leisure centre. The changing rooms in the main school building are unsatisfactory, neither has integral toilet facilities. The specialist staff receive strong support from those other staff who make a valuable contribution in supporting the curriculum and in providing a wide and popular range of sports and games after school. This contributes much to the school's reputation and enables many talented students to reach higher standards in area and regional competition.

174 Since the last inspection improvements have been made in ensuring that overall standards of attainment are at least satisfactory and there is a consistently higher standard in the quality of specialist teaching. Some of the inconsistencies in timetabling, grouping and staffing arrangements remain unresolved though the school's review of PE will help to raise standards in the subject.

3

Religious Education

175 Since the last report, RE has been allocated sufficient time throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and the schemes of work closely reflect the objectives of the Gloucestershire Agreed Syllabus. Time for Post 16 RE is however, still well below that prescribed in the LEA scheme. It was not possible to observe any lessons in the Post 16 core programme.

176 The quality of teaching is good. In Key Stage 3, where specialists teach the entire programme, it is consistently good and sometimes very good. In Key Stage 4, there is some variation because some non-specialists are occasionally less confident with some material. Nevertheless, teaching is usually good and well

prepared. Students taught by experienced non-specialist teachers performed creditably in the recent GCSE examination. Teaching on the A Level philosophy of religion and ethics course is very good with stimulating and carefully focused lessons which challenge the students to think and justify their opinions. All of the features which support good teaching and effective progress, are present in the department. There are detailed and carefully designed schemes of work with clear objectives for each lesson. In most cases, classroom management is skilled. Classroom protocols are explained and politely insisted upon. This helps teachers to use oral work and to tackle quite complex issues using class debate, brainstorming exercises, paired and group discussions. Occasionally this approach is not so successful because of lapses in attention or limited motivation.

Most teachers generate a good working atmosphere in which the students feel confident about expressing their views. All views are valued. There is judicious use of video material to pose issues and stimulate response for example in a Key Stage 4 lesson when sensitive presentation of case studies about euthanasia challenged students to think about ethical complexities. Key Stage 3 students not only learn about the diversity of religious forms and practice in the world faiths but are encouraged to identify common elements and compare these with their own emerging views and opinions. When religious artefacts are used, they are used sensitively and with due ceremony, honouring the traditions of the respective faiths.

177 Teachers benefit from the good working atmosphere, which has been developed in the department and in the school. Students co-operate well with teachers and with each other. They listen carefully and do what they are asked. They appreciate marking with constructive comment and know how well they are doing.

They are usually responsive when questioned and show respect for each other's views. Occasionally lapses in behaviour can slow progress and cause frustration to the majority. Nearly all of the observed lessons however, were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

178 The combination of good teaching, sound relationships and positive attitudes to learning help to generate good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. SEN students also progress well, helped by effective use of support staff and the success they have in oral work. In Year 7 varied experience of the subject is quickly consolidated and classroom routines are developed so that oral work can be effectively managed. Students learn about the forms, practices, symbols and sacred writings of the world religions and develop some insight into other cultures. Many start to appreciate that there are common moral elements and basic aspects of belief.

Some start to compare these with their own attitudes and beliefs. As they move through the key stage, higher attainers begin to appreciate how religious belief influences the way in which people live their lives and respond to social and moral issues. They explore the importance of promises and vows, developing some appreciation of religious vocation. In Key Stage 4 they are challenged by a range of complex ideas, examining forms of discrimination, prejudice and the response of Christian and other faiths to these issues. Some find the subject matter hard but most are willing to participate and develop listening and oral skills through sharing views and information. Some have well-developed opinions which they refine as they realise the complexities inherent in moral dilemmas. In newly instituted Post 16 A Level course, students are already showing clear gains in knowledge and understanding of theories about the existence of God. They learn to compare and contrast underlying principles in the respective arguments, appreciating the historical contexts.

179 Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is at least in line with national expectations for this age range and is sometimes above this level. Since prior attainment on entry in RE is extremely varied, there are significant gains in knowledge and understanding through the key stage with an emphasis on learning from religion as well as about religion. During Key Stage 4, this momentum is largely maintained. Nearly the whole year group is entered for the short course GCSE examination. The first sets of results were gained in 1999. All who were entered obtained a pass grade, and nearly 59% secured grades A*-C, with girls doing very much better than boys at this level. Attainment in lessons is at or just above national expectations. Post 16 A Level will not produce the first set of results until 2001. Current attainment in lessons is above expectations for this stage in the programme.

180 The subject is managed within the context of the humanities faculty. The head of faculty provides positive and vigorous leadership and is supportive of developments that have taken place to enhance the status of RE within the school. There is no designated subject leader and this lack of formal structure with clear lines of accountability restricts the scope for delegation of budget, training, standardisation of assessment and longer term development planning for RE.

181 There has been significant progress since the last report. The improved time allocation means that the objectives of the agreed syllabus can be achieved and the status of the subject has strengthened. The introduction of an A Level course provides a good progression from the main school course.

3 **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

3 **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

182 The inspection was carried out by a team of eleven inspectors, including a lay inspector. During the week almost 230 lessons, registrations and assemblies were inspected. A number of lunchtime and after school extra-curricular activities were seen. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, members of the senior management team, heads of faculties, departments and years and other holders of positions of particular responsibility in the school. Curriculum, pastoral and administrative matters were discussed with many members of the teaching and support staff. Inspectors attended meetings of staff, tutors, the management group and a faculty review group. Inspectors looked at the practical and written work of many students. All the available written work and reports of a representative sample of students from each year group were scrutinised. Planned discussions were held with these students and informal conversations with many more. Before the inspection the Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 40 parents. The team considered the responses of 265 parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

3 **Student data**

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Year 7 – Year 11	797	21	173	35

3 **Teachers and classes**

3 **Qualified teachers (Year 7 – Year 11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	45.19
Number of students per qualified teacher:	17.64

3 **Education support staff (Year 7 – Year 11)**

Total number of education support staff:	16
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	367.5
Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	78.7
Average teaching group size:	KS3 26
	KS4 23

Financial data

Financial year:	1998
	£
Total Income	1,945,113
Total Expenditure	1,918,553
Expenditure per student	2,371.51
Balance brought forward from previous year	44,454
Balance carried forward to next year	70,014

Number of questionnaires sent out: 797

Number of questionnaires returned: 265

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	23	71	5	1	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	35	60	2	2	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	16	54	18	5	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	17	64	12	6	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	21	65	7	6	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	22	67	9	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	23	61	13	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	15	66	10	6	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	23	58	15	2	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	14	60	18	5	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	27	62	7	3	0

Note: Nil responses are not included, therefore sum of percentages may not = 100%