

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **DE FERRERS HIGH SCHOOL**

Burton upon Trent

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique Reference Number: 124442

Inspection Number: 185007

Headteacher: Mr M A York

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Reporting inspector: Dr R G Wallace  
1050

Dates of inspection: 11-15 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708253

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J A Taylor
Date of previous inspection:	November 1994

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mrs G Hoggard, Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; attendance; support, guidance and pupils' welfare; partnership with parents and the community.
Mrs G Murray	English	
Mr M Beale	Mathematics	
Mr C Parsons	Science	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
Mr G Headley	Art and physical education	
Mr D Daniels	Design and technology	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mrs S King	Geography	
Mr R Grogan	History and religious education	
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- A high proportion of teaching is good or very good.
- The school benefits from strong leadership focused on raising standards.
- Standards are rising, particularly at GCSE.
- Relationships and standards of behaviour are good.
- The school makes imaginative use of a budget that is well below the national average.

### • Where the school has weaknesses

- I. The match between teaching methods and the varied attainment of pupils in the same class is not always adequate.
- II. Planning by faculties is not sufficiently geared to the achievement of the school's aims.
- III. Knowledge and understanding of cultures other than British are not sufficiently covered in lessons.
- IV. The curriculum does not cover IT adequately for some 14-16-year-old pupils, an essential unit is omitted from the National Curriculum history requirements for 11-14-year-old pupils, and many pupils do not have access to religious education in the Sixth Form.

**The school's strengths greatly outweigh its 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 pupils at the school.**

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

The school has made considerable progress since the last inspection. Examination results at GCSE fell sharply after the last inspection, but have since been restored and are now higher than in 1994 and well above the national average. A Level results have continued to be above the national average.

The school has responded well to those key issues of the previous OFSTED report which were within its power to affect. There has been an improvement in resources, particularly accommodation, although problems remain. The improvement in learning resources is particularly to the school's credit, given that the present headteacher was faced with a deficit in the budget on his appointment. Acts of worship are held, but not with the regularity required by statute. Religious education is now provided for all pupils aged 11-16 but not for many in the Sixth Form. The roles of senior staff have been reviewed. The duties of each senior member of staff are clearly stated in job descriptions and carried out.

The school is in a strong position to continue to improve.

## Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18-year-olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	ey
				<i>well above average</i>
				<i>above average</i>
Key Stage 3	B	C		<i>average</i>
GCSE Examinations	B	C		<i>below average</i>
A/AS Levels	A	N/A		<i>well below average</i>

The 1999 results in Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) were above the national average and in line with those for similar schools. The 1998 results in English were close to the national average for most pupils, but with more of De Ferrers' pupils achieving the higher Level 6 than was the case nationally. In mathematics the overall results for pupils achieving Level 5 and higher were above the national average. Those for science were above the national average both for those achieving Level 5 and higher and those achieving Level 6 and higher. There were some changes between 1998 and 1999, but none that affects the school's overall results.

The 1999 GCSE results were a big improvement on those of the previous year. The attainment of both girls and boys rose, but there was a particularly big improvement in that of boys. Results were satisfactory in the three core subjects and particularly good in art, drama, food technology, textiles, music and religious education.

A Level results have been consistently above average for several years and were well above average in 1999.

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	IT	geography
Years 10-11	Very good		design and technology (resistant materials)
Sixth form	Very good		
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

A high proportion of teaching, over half, was good or very good. There was good teaching in all subjects and it is not possible to distinguish between them at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. The rest of the teaching was mostly satisfactory. Less than 7% of teaching was unsatisfactory, and some of this was in single lessons by teachers who were otherwise effective. There is a need in some classes for the teachers to match work more closely to the breadth of individual pupils' attainment. The homework set and the marking of pupils' work by some teachers is very effective, but there are some weaknesses in these matters and more careful monitoring is needed.

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



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

## Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good: pupils, with only few exceptions, behave well in classes and are keen to learn, and they behave well around the school.
Attendance	Good: attendance rates are above the national average, and pupils are mostly punctual to school and to lessons.
Ethos*	Very good: most pupils have positive attitudes to learning; relationships between pupils and between them and their teachers are good and this promotes effective learning; the school is strongly committed to raising standards.
Leadership and management	Good overall: there is strong and effective leadership from the top and mostly effective leadership at the level of middle managers; planning by faculties is not sufficiently geared to the achievement of school aims as set out in the school plan.
Curriculum	Good overall: IT skills are not developed sufficiently for some pupils at Key Stage 4; history at Key Stage 3 does not include a required National Curriculum component; religious education is not available to all in the Sixth Form.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory: the school is in a transitional stage, with improvements planned but not yet implemented.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good overall: good provision for moral development and very good for social development; spiritual development is satisfactory; cultural development is good overall, but with insufficient emphasis on cultures other than European.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory: a very tight budget leaves little scope for reducing class sizes; accommodation has been greatly improved but is still inadequate; learning resources have been greatly improved.
Value for money	Good: the school achieves much with a very low income.

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

## The parents' views of the school

### What most parents like about the school

V. Parents find the school very approachable.

VI. They like the range of extra-curricular activities.

VII. A very large majority of parents are satisfied with standards of work and behaviour.

### What some parents are not happy about

VIII. Parents are concerned about large classes.

IX. Some parents (10% of those replying to the survey) are dissatisfied with the homework set.

X. Some parents (11% of those responding to the survey) are dissatisfied with behaviour in a few classes.

Inspectors confirm that the generally approving views of parents are well founded. Some classes are large. At Key Stage 3 this occurs mainly in the higher band to offset smaller classes in the lower band. There are some large classes in Year 12, partly the consequence of more pupils staying into the Sixth Form in 1999, and the school intends to rectify this for these pupils when they enter Year 13. Inspectors found that some very good work is set to be done at home, but that there are inconsistencies and some unsatisfactory practice. The general standard of behaviour is very good, but there were a very small number of lessons, mainly at Key Stage 3, where the behaviour was unacceptable.

## ·           **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The school is in a strong position to maintain its progress and should now act upon these four key issues in order to:

- \*       ensure a better match between teaching methods and the varied attainment of pupils in the same class by:
  - XI.   providing guidance on the approaches that will achieve this, including the more varied use of vocabulary to satisfy the needs of the ablest and least able pupils, as well as different tasks and homework that extend the ablest and support those with special educational needs
  - XII.   identifying the strengths that already meet this goal in some departments and using these for school-based staff training
  - XIII.   monitoring the effectiveness of teaching by observation to ensure that the required changes are taking place;
- \*       achieve a better response from some departments to the aims of the school development plan by:
  - XIV.   requiring faculties in their subject development plans to show in greater detail than at present what they will do in the coming year as their contribution to the achievement of the school aims
  - XV.   establishing stronger accountability from faculty heads to senior managers for the work that they do, including regular, rigorous dialogue on progress
  - XVI.   enabling more observation of teaching to take place, as is already intended
  - XVII.   tightening the responsibilities of faculty heads in those faculties that cover several subjects, so that their contribution to the school's aims of self-improvement are clear and that faculty heads are accountable;
- \*       promote greater awareness of non-European cultures and understanding of the ways in which people should conduct themselves in multi-ethnic environments;
- \*       ensure compliance with National Curriculum requirements by:
  - XVIII.   enabling pupils at Key Stage 4, who do not take an IT or business education course, to develop their IT to the levels expected
  - XIX.   providing a course in religious education in the Sixth Form to which all pupils have access if they wish
  - XX.   changing the Key Stage 3 history syllabus so that it includes a non-European study as prescribed.

When considering its action plan, the Governing Body should also consider these other points:

- XXI.   the need to broaden the Sixth Form curriculum so that it meets the needs of pupils for whom a full A Level programme is inappropriate;

- XXII. a reduction in some Year 12 A Level class sizes once these pupils enter Year 13;
- XXIII. the contribution that greater consistency in the quality of marking and homework should make to the raising of standards;
- XXIV. an improvement in the level and quality of support for pupils with English as an additional language;
- XXV. the consolidation of improvements in provision for pupils with special educational needs.

## · **INTRODUCTION**

### · **Characteristics of the school**

1. De Ferrers High is a school for girls and boys aged 11-18. At the time of the inspection there were 1,775 pupils on the roll in total, divided between the two campuses of Trent and Dove. The attainment of the pupils on entry to the school covers the full spectrum, but with more of the abler pupils than is found nationally. About 10% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, similar to the national average. Many pupils come from relatively advantaged areas. There is a good gender balance overall and in all years. About 10% of the pupils are from ethnic minorities, although only a small proportion of these pupils needs support with English language. About 8% of the pupils are considered to have special educational needs. The local authority has made statements of special educational needs for 41 of these.

2. **The school's aims** are embodied in the School Statement, which is prominently displayed. It states that De Ferrers, in partnership with parents and the community, is committed to providing:

- XXVI. a caring, friendly and disciplined school;
- XXVII. a stimulating, challenging and supportive learning environment geared to continuous improvement and high achievement for all;
- XXVIII. an atmosphere in which all members can develop and feel valued.

**The school has agreed these targets** for improvement in the year 2000:

- XXIX. 51% achieving A\*-C at GCSE in five or more subjects
- XXX. 98% achieving A\*-G in one or more subjects
- XXXI. Average points score at GCSE of 38.

· **Key indicators**

4.

**Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>2</sup>**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	143	160	303

· <b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	89	97	94
	Girls	122	104	108
	Total	211	201	202
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	70(54)	67(66)	67(71)
	National	65(60)	60(63)	56(64)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	46(21)	36(43)	32(41)
	National	35(24)	36(39)	27(31)

  

· <b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	97	97	93
	Girls	130	114	112
	Total	227	211	205
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	75(75)	70(66)	68(70)
	National	62(60)	64(64)	62(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	30(36)	37(40)	31(39)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(29)

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>3</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	163	147	310

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 pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	56	147	158
	Girls	64	140	142
	Total	120	287	300
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	39(51)	93(91.9)	97(98)
	National	44.6(45.1)	89.8(86.4)	95.2(92.3)

### Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>4</sup>

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	55	37	92

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	16.9	22.1	19(20.4)	2	2	1.3
National	NA	NA	17.6	NA	NA	NA

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

4 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	Authorised	School	7.3
reporting year:	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	0.5
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

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## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during		Number
the previous year:	Fixed period	72
	Permanent	1

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	54
	Satisfactory or better	92.5
	Less than satisfactory	7.5

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

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

#### **Attainment and progress**

4. In the 1998 national assessments of attainment at the end of Year 9 - the Standard Attainment Tasks (SATs) - the pupils achieved results for the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science broadly in line with the national average. The overall results were above average for similar schools. There was little difference between boys and girls. There were variations between subjects in 1998. The English results for Level 5 and higher were close to the national average overall, but with the ablest pupils doing particularly well. In mathematics the results for Level 5 and higher were above the national average and for Level 6 and higher were close to the national average. Those for science were above the national average for both Level 5 and higher, and Level 6 and higher. In 1999 there was a significant fall in the English results at both levels. Mathematics and science results were little changed in 1999 at Level 5 and higher, but there was an improvement in mathematics at Level 6 and higher, and a fall in science at Level 6 and higher. The 1999 results were above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools.

5. GCSE results were much higher in the year of the last OFSTED report in 1994 than they had been the previous year, and they fell in the two years immediately after that report. After that they were erratic, with low results in 1998. The best ever results for some years were achieved in 1999 when they were not only higher than in 1994 but also above the national average. 53.5% of pupils achieved grades A\*-C in 1999 and the average points score per pupil also rose. The improvement was made possible by a very big improvement in the performance of boys, whilst the standard for girls also rose. In French, boys did as well as girls which is not the national picture. There were significant differences between subjects in 1999. Taking account of the pupils' attainment when beginning GCSE in Year 10, the pupils did best in art, drama, food technology, textiles, music and religious education. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, results were satisfactory.

6. At A Level the average points score has been well above the national average for some years and this was also the case in 1998 and 1999, with a rise between the two years. The best A Level results in 1999, judged against the pupils' potential assessed on previous GCSE results, were in mathematics (where the base-line included the results of pupils who took the examination in Year 10), chemistry, geography, history, music, French, German and physical education. Results in technology, economics, sociology and art were not as good as they should have been. 62% of pupils entered for GNVQ Advanced business and Intermediate health and social care courses completed all units with about half of these being awarded distinctions or merits.

7. Attainment observed during the inspection, both in lessons and in samples of the pupils' work, was a little above average overall at Key Stage 3 and significantly above average at Key Stage 4. Attainment in the Sixth Form was above average. There were no significant variations between subjects, except in information technology (IT). Pupils at Key Stage 4 who do not take IT or business studies courses or who are not self-motivated and self-taught, are not systematically developing the full range of IT skills and not reaching a sufficiently high standard. There were no significant variations in attainment by gender. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is improving and there are early indications of benefits for the pupils' standards of work, but there is some way to go before the progress of these pupils is satisfactory. Many pupils from homes where English is not the first language are making satisfactory progress and participate well in lessons. Pupils often arrive at the school with English, which is too limited for them to gain fully from the teaching, and insufficient support is available to the school for these pupils.



8. Standards of literacy are generally high. The pupils' listening and speaking skills are satisfactory at both key stages. Listening is a particular strength, with pupils being attentive to each other's comments during group work or contributions in lessons. There are inadequate opportunities for extended speaking in some subjects, such as geography. The use of spoken language is developed well in drama. The pupils have an above-average standard of accuracy, fluency and range in their writing. Opportunities are provided in English, history and religious education for extended writing, but insufficiently so in geography. Most pupils develop the ability to make good notes. Standards of reading are good overall. The widespread use of worksheets hinders able pupils from developing the higher reading skills because the worksheets are pitched for the class as a whole and the reading levels are too low for the ablest pupils. The libraries have been transformed into flexible learning centres and are having a beneficial impact on the pupils' reading and research skills. There are still shortages of books in the flexible learning centres in some subjects, such as those suitable for A Level science. The school's literacy strategy is beginning to have an impact. It is currently focused on key skills, liaison with primary schools and work in English, but its extension is planned. The pupils' presentation of their work varies but is good overall.

9. Number skills are satisfactory overall, although better when exercised on paper than mentally. Pupils can mostly apply the correct operations to solve problems and have a sound understanding of place value. The school has appointed a member of the mathematics department as numeracy co-ordinator, but there is not a consistent approach at present even in the mathematics department itself to the development of number skills, and mathematics is not used widely enough in other subjects for investigations or problem-solving.

10. Information technology has developed greatly. Skills are satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3, and good in Year 8. Some Year 7 pupils who are new to the school have low IT skills. At Key Stage 4 attainment is high in IT lessons and options that use a high element of IT where the pupils have chosen the subjects and are already enthusiasts for IT. Whilst the design and technology courses taken by all pupils include a compulsory IT module, other IT skills are not systematically developed for pupils not taking specific IT courses at this key stage, and attainment is low. Effective co-operation between a food technology and an IT teacher in a Year 11 lesson enabled the pupils to make very good progress. Many Sixth Form pupils have good IT skills, often acquired without direct tuition in school, but some have inadequate skills and they do not regularly use IT. Standards of IT in both GNVQ courses are satisfactory. The flexible learning centres are open before and after school in order to increase the pupils' access to computers.

11. The progress that pupils make in lessons is at least satisfactory in a large majority of lessons. In about 40% of lessons the pupils make good progress. This is the result mainly of good teaching and well-motivated pupils. The most rapid progress is made at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Unsatisfactory progress in about 10% of all lessons overall is concentrated mostly in some Year 8 and Year 9 classes and is related to weaknesses in teaching, sometimes a failure by a teacher to cope with poorly-behaved pupils. Some Year 12 A Level classes are very large, and this is limiting the teaching methods that may be used and therefore affecting progress.

12. The progress made by pupils over time is generally satisfactory. Comparisons of the pupils' attainment at the ages of 11, 16 and 18 show that most pupils make at least average progress, with many making above-average progress. There are variations by subject. Whereas most pupils made satisfactory, good or very good progress during the courses leading to 1999 GCSE examinations, this was not the case for geography, German, science and sociology.

• **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

13. The pupils mostly behave very well. This is a strength of the school. Attitudes to work are enthusiastic and positive. In a Year 9 IT lesson, for example, pupils showed good levels of concentration. In a Year 12 sociology lesson, despite difficult material on the nature of functionalism, the class worked hard and concentrated for a sustained period. Many pupils demonstrate a capacity for personal study, for example by taking meticulous notes in lessons or by researching topics at lunchtime in the flexible learning centre. There are isolated pockets of poor behaviour in lessons, usually linked to weak teaching and mostly at Key Stage 3. The inspection findings in general support the views of a large majority of parents that behaviour in the school is good overall.

14. Pupils generally behave well and move around sensibly on both campuses, despite the pressure on space at the Dove campus. At lunchtimes, break and assembly large numbers of pupils use staircases and corridors efficiently and with good humour. They are polite and generally trustworthy. The school buildings and environment are treated with respect, although there is a continuing problem of litter on the Dove campus which worsens through the school day. There were 73 fixed-term exclusions last year, but only one was permanent. The pupils understand that a fixed-term exclusion is the culmination of an escalating series of sanctions and its use is effective.

15. Relationships between pupils and staff, and between pupils themselves, are very good. A Year 13 English lesson on *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost*, for example, showed pupils willing to use their peers to clarify and extend understanding. Groups were supportive of one another and good listeners. Year 7 pupils in an IT lesson were very co-operative and able to help each other with the minimum of fuss. Pupils in Year 10 used a collaborative approach when setting up gymnastics equipment. Pupils report some instances of bullying such as name-calling and threatening behaviour, but feel the school deals with them appropriately. Pupils of all ages are good at working collaboratively. Girls and boys talk, play and work together easily and unselfconsciously, although pupils of Asian ethnicity tend to band together in separate groups.

16. Where opportunities allow, pupils are respectful of other people's views and feelings. They are particularly good at listening both to teachers and to each other. A Year 10 art lesson on disguise had pupils sharing their ideas with friends and asking opinions of their work. There is inadequate awareness, however, of the religions and beliefs of ethnic minority children in the school, and little celebration of their cultural heritage.

17. Pupils embrace responsibility eagerly and are very willing to take the initiative shown, for example, in the confidence with which they try out the new language in French and German lessons. They do routine classroom jobs, help out in the flexible learning centre, contribute to year and school councils and are active in various charity fund-raising activities. There are several opportunities for older pupils to assist younger ones. Year 7 pupils, for example, contribute to a welcome booklet for new pupils and current Sixth Formers attend the induction conference to talk to new recruits and also help out lower down the school with clubs and homework.

## **Attendance**

18. Attendance is good at 92.2% with unauthorized absence at 0.5% (less than half the national average). In the third week of the inspection term the unauthorized absence figures averaged 0.23%, varying from 0.67% in Year 10 to nil in Years 8 and 9. Generally pupils come to school and lessons on time and understand the importance of punctuality.

Despite the potential problems of a split site, close monitoring ensures that truancy during the day occurs only rarely and is detected.

## · **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### · **Teaching**

19. The quality of teaching is high overall, with 54% of lessons taught well or very well, and all but 7% of the rest taught at least satisfactorily. There is some good teaching in all departments.

20. The high quality of teaching was evident in several English lessons, for example a Year 9 lesson based on Willy Russell's *Our Day Out*. The teacher gave an enthusiastic introduction, had prepared key words on the board, shared the objectives and content of the lesson with the pupils, gave them prompts at key points, emphasized the importance of recording points for future study and monitored the pupils' rate of work. In a mathematics class with an able Year 11 group beginning a new statistics topic, the teacher's good knowledge of the subject was used to set a brisk pace with the confident use of examples and the correct use of technical language. The pupils were very attentive and achieved a high standard of work. A well-taught Year 10 biology lesson was notable for the effective relationships established by the teacher with the pupils, the insistence on the use of correct terms, a good balance between instruction and activities, an emphasis on safety, and the development of independent working by the pupils.

21. Year 10 pupils made very good progress in a technology lesson when making bread. After a brisk introduction the pupils worked independently, observing the rules of the classroom, and the teacher helped individuals whilst keeping control and offering praise appropriately. Much progress is being made in IT lessons, as for example in a Year 10 lesson where pupils were working on their GCSE coursework. The homework was reviewed quickly and pupils then got down to work on tasks that matched their different levels of attainment. Their past work had been marked with helpful diagnostic comments. Appropriate use was being made of the school intranet and individuals received very good guidance.

22. Finding information from texts on the Cold War and analysing the data in the form of diagrams before discussion enabled pupils in a Year 11 history lesson to attain well and make very good progress. The teacher had high expectations and used humour appropriately to maintain a good working relationship with the pupils, whilst they used higher thinking skills such as deduction to increase their understanding. A Year 9 geography lesson on longitude and latitude was effective because of the teacher's clear instructions and the brisk pace maintained. There was also an emphasis on the use of homework to supplement the shortage of time in lessons. Very good progress was made in a Year 7 religious education lesson on animism. The teacher's planning was good, starting from the pupils' own experiences, and the methods were varied to maintain the pupils' interest and ensure a brisk pace, with the result that the pupils made good progress. Boys in particular made good progress in a Year 11 French lesson on places and directions. The class included several pupils with special educational needs, and the teacher's planning and organisation, with frequent checks for understanding, enabled the pupils to reach a satisfactory standard. A very well-taught Year 8 German lesson covering case and gender with family relationships was conducted almost entirely in the language, with various activities including singing questions and answers. Discipline and praise were properly balanced. Pupils in a Year 13 A Level psychology lesson reached a high level of understanding of how dreams are analysed and showed much mental agility when engaged in role-play, and this well-planned exercise as the culmination of a long lesson enabled them to make very good progress and consolidate their understanding.

23. A formal still-life drawing class, extended over several lessons, enabled Year 13 pupils to make good progress. The objects were well chosen to provoke close examination. The teacher had detailed knowledge of the pupils' strengths and knew how to guide them to improve. One of several well-taught music lessons was with Year 9 pupils who were learning keyboard skills, combining chords into a short sequence and then using it as the basis for a composition assignment. A helpful recap of the last lesson reminded pupils of the options and they were given a good strategy for planning a composition. The

teacher stopped the class to give new instructions at appropriate intervals. A Year 9 physical education lesson on rugby was effective, with a good combination of skills training and then the use of those skills.

24. The quality of marking varies greatly. In science, marking needs to give clearer guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. Marking in geography is mostly good at Key Stage 3, although some Year 9 pupils had no work marked by a supply teacher for three months last term, and this failure went unchecked; at Key Stage 4 two teachers mark well and the other hardly at all. Helpful diagnostic comments are provided on work in IT. There were long gaps in the marking of some pupils' mathematics work last year, and the standard of marking still varies, with few teachers providing written guidance on why errors have occurred or providing guidance to aid the pupils' understanding.

25. Homework is a routine feature of the school, but its quality varies. In mathematics, whilst homework is set, it is at times undemanding for lower sets. In design and technology the use of homework is only just beginning to make a contribution to the pupils' progress. Overall improvements are needed both to marking and to homework to ensure that they make their full contribution to the school's aim of raising standards.

26. A weakness evident in some lessons, including some judged otherwise to be satisfactory, was that teachers do not acknowledge sufficiently the breadth of attainment in most classes. The effect of this on pupils varies from subject to subject. In some cases the teachers do provide appropriately different work for the very ablest and for those with special educational needs, but not for the wide range of attainment between these two extremes; in other classes the teaching is to the middle. Lower band classes often have either work that is little different from the upper band, thus ignoring the purpose of the different bands, or sometimes have work that is pitched at a much lower level than that required by some pupils. Some teachers tackle this well, including subtle variations in vocabulary to meet the learning needs of the different pupils. These teachers have much to contribute to their colleagues' professional development.

27. The use of learning support assistants and teachers to support pupils with special educational needs is sometimes effective, as in some Year 8 geography lessons. The quality of this work varies, however, and in general there is inadequate collaboration between class teachers and support staff to ensure that these pupils make sufficient progress. In a Year 7 physical education class the assistant gave no support to a pupil during the lesson, restricting the help to changing clothes. More training and guidance are needed by some of the assistants before they can make an effective contribution to the pupils' progress.

28. The unsatisfactory teaching consisted mostly of single lessons by a few teachers, with more than half of it in three subjects: design and technology (resistant materials), geography and music. In these three subjects there was also much good teaching, although less in design technology and geography than in most subjects, whilst the proportion of very good teaching in music was very high. The reasons for unsatisfactory teaching were usually that the work was pitched too low or occasionally too high, the presentations were not stimulating, the subject skills were not sufficiently developed or that there were weaknesses in class control. The school is about to embark on more routine monitoring of teaching and should concentrate some of its resources on assisting some teachers to remedy these faults.

#### **The curriculum and assessment**

29. The curriculum matches the school's aims. It is broad, balanced and relevant. Curriculum plans promote the continuity of pupils' learning and progress at a satisfactory rate. For the most part statutory obligations are met but there are a few weaknesses. IT is not used sufficiently in some subjects. The music curriculum which has some very strong aspects is inhibited by inadequate accommodation and insufficient specialist IT resources on the Dove campus. All pupils have lessons in personal and social education and learning support is available for some. In history the omission of a study unit on a non-European society from the Key Stage 3 curriculum has significant repercussions for

the school's multicultural provision and is also in breach of National Curriculum requirements. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is undergoing development. Progress has been made and the basic arrangements are sound, but there is still much detailed work to be done before these pupils will be adequately supported.

30. At Key Stage 4 there is a strong emphasis upon balance with a degree of choice. Some pupils are entered for GCSE mathematics in Year 10 and then follow a statistics course in Year 11. The choice of language is extended to include Urdu. Religious education is provided as part of personal and social education (PSE) and pupils can also take GCSE religious education as an option; however, the time allocated to religious education in PSE is significantly below that which is recommended and the programme of study does not reflect the religious diversity in the community. Sex education is covered both in PSE and in relevant subjects. A sound and detailed careers guidance programme is provided. This is based upon an agreement with Staffordshire Partnership, the contracted careers service. Although most courses are at GCSE level, some lower-attaining pupils are entered for other external qualifications such as the Certificate of Achievement where it is deemed appropriate.

31. A wide range of Advanced Level GCE courses is available in the Sixth Form. General studies can be taken by many pupils, but not by all. Two GNVQ courses can also be taken. More vocational courses are planned following the current curriculum review. Other courses can be taken, such as Community Service and Young Enterprise, which make a contribution towards the pupils' intellectual and personal development as well as providing a better understanding of the world beyond school. A range of Royal Society of Arts (RSA) IT skills courses can be taken to enhance this core skill. Overall the Sixth Form curriculum is sound. There was, abnormally, last year quite a high rate of pupils not continuing with A Level courses, or reaching the end of such courses without achieving a grade. In Year 12 there are some large classes and this is limiting the teaching methods that may be used.

32. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects at Key Stage 3, except for the IT element in music and the failure to follow a course in past non-European societies in history. At Key Stage 4 requirements are met in all subjects except IT, where the use of IT is insufficient to guarantee appropriate access for all. Attainment in English is enhanced by means of a breakfast session for higher attainers in Year 9 which targets National Curriculum Level 8. Whilst the mathematics curriculum has detailed units of work and continuity and progression are mapped through all years, the scheme of work needs to ensure more consistent coverage of the application and use of mathematics. A more consistent approach to the use of number in other subjects is necessary. In Years 8 and 9 science is taught in separate subjects.

33. Extra-curricular provision in the school is very good and involves many pupils. There is a very wide choice of activities in most curriculum areas and year groups. The contribution made by the expressive arts faculty is noteworthy. In music there are many high quality activities, covering vocal and instrumental work, with public performances including radio appearances. There is an impressive list of extra-curricular sporting activities. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is strong throughout the school from Year 9 upwards and there are active Young Enterprise groups in the Sixth Form.

34. The assessment of the pupils' work is good in several subjects. The science scheme of work, for example, outlines aspects of assessment and how work can be matched to the differing levels of pupils' attainment. The assessment system provides systematic data on pupil attainment using methods which are integral to the course. The IT-based recording system allows for routine monitoring. At Key Stage 4 assessment has been used to inform planning to good effect. In mathematics good use is made of assessment data to monitor progress and set targets for underachievers. Assessment procedures are in place for IT at Key Stage 3 and a National Curriculum level is reported appropriately at the end of Year 9. At Key Stage 4 the assessment of pupils following IT-related courses is in line with examination board requirements; however, the assessment of IT in subjects needs to be developed to ensure full coverage in Years 10 and 11. The assessment of pupils' work in art is good and the department is beginning to use exemplars of work matched to different levels in order to achieve standardisation, although at Key Stage 3 assessment is not sufficiently related to skill levels. Generally, faculties are not

making enough use of the evidence of assessment to amend teaching methods.

35. The school has developed a broad-ranging equal opportunities policy which aims to cover all aspects of school life. The school provides an environment in which the equal opportunities policy is generally reflected in practice. The practice of some pupils taking GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10 is sound but teachers need to consider further whether all pupils achieve an examination grade which reflects their ability. Access to the Key Stage 4 IT curriculum is not guaranteed for all. There are insufficient opportunities in the curriculum to recognise the cultural diversity in the local community. Although boys and girls have equal access to optional subjects in the curriculum, there are instances where there is a significant imbalance. There are no boys taking childcare, and girls are under-represented in resistant materials and systems and control. GNVQ health and social care is taken predominantly by girls and economics by boys.

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

36. Provision for the pupils' moral and social development is good overall. Pupils benefit from a school code that is displayed throughout the school in classrooms and put into practice. Other activities to promote the pupils' development, such as the 'Thought for the Day', are well documented but not always promoted in practice. Opportunities for the pupils' spiritual development are satisfactory. The provision for the pupils' cultural development is very good in relation to European culture, but does not include sufficient on the cultures of other countries; it is good overall.

37. Within the curriculum, opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of spiritual issues are limited. In religious education there is a positive contribution that starts in Year 7 with an exploration of personal beliefs and displays them as leaves on a class 'beliefs tree'. The spiritual dimensions of most subjects are not well explored and there is little evidence of the use of the school's diverse cultural intake as a natural resource to broaden pupils' understanding of spiritual issues. Assemblies on both campuses are of a good standard. They link with the annual calendar of themes, but do not overall provide a wide range of spiritual experiences for pupils. Some of the assemblies incorporate Christian prayers or an invitation to participate in an act of reflection. Assemblies overall do not satisfy the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of worship. Insufficient use is made of the pupils' own natural diversity in faiths. Overall, provision for the pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory.

38. Provision for the pupils' moral development is good. Pupils know right from wrong and interactions between adults and pupils provides strong evidence that most are aware of the mutual respect that is expected and given between those who work and study at the school. The well-organised and recently revised Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme, staffed by committed teachers, contributes well to the pupils' moral education, covering a wide range of topics. Pupils are well informed about where they can get help on a wide range of concerns including sex education. The school takes its responsibilities for moral education very seriously and invites guests into the school when tackling major topics such as drug abuse. Some subjects, such as religious education, English and child development, provide good opportunities for examining moral questions, but otherwise curricular opportunities are under-developed.

39. The provision for social development is very good. A wide range of activities both in and out of school provides pupils with many opportunities to develop social skills and awareness. In school, Sixth Form pupils support teachers in activities such as music and also provide an induction booklet and party for the new Sixth Form. Other pupils have opportunities to develop skills through participation in, for example, a school branch of a bank. The school council has a high profile and time is devoted to ensuring that pupils meet regularly, although some pupils feel that it is ineffectual. The level of participation in clubs and sport is high. The whole school engages in charitable activities such as collections for Cancer Research and the annual harvest festival. Pupils enjoy the many and varied school journeys, for example to Normandy, and derive much benefit from their experiences.

40. Provision for cultural development is good overall. The school participates in a variety of visits and excursions to local places of interest. Music and drama in the school are major strengths and provide many opportunities for pupils to perform in groups such as the Voce Singers, the large Junior Wind Band and school drama productions. The development and use of the school's own cultural diversity are limited. There is little reference to other faiths and cultures in the curriculum, except in religious education. The study of a past non-European society is omitted from the history syllabus, and an opportunity is thus missed for the pupils to learn about another culture.

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

41. The school is a very large institution and takes its pastoral and monitoring role very seriously. It is helped by the division of the school on to two campuses, each of which has about the same number of pupils as an average secondary school. The co-ordinated teams of form tutors, year co-ordinators and assistant year co-ordinators, headed by key stage managers, enables both close monitoring of pupils and consistency of approach to be achieved.

42. The partnership arrangement with feeder primary schools ensures that there is tight liaison between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, not only on curriculum matters and test results but on individual pupils through visits to the primary teachers and a whole-day induction visit for Year 6 pupils. This allows staff to place pupils into appropriate teaching groups. New Year 7 pupils are monitored closely and the year co-ordinator encourages drop-in sessions for pupils having difficulties. Referrals may also come from PSE tutors, form tutors or the school nurse, who also offers counselling.

43. The system of annual reports, brief interim reports and parents' evenings ensures that pupils' academic progress is closely monitored. Parents may be alerted to problems or may themselves raise concerns. Close liaison between pupil care teams for each year ensures that pupils may move between teaching groups if necessary.

44. The move to Key Stage 4 coincides with a change to the Trent campus. Again, induction days, transfer of information and co-ordinated meetings ensure a smooth transition. Year 11 pupils are very closely monitored, using assessment data and teachers' grade projections. Underachieving pupils are individually mentored through a carefully structured framework which last year resulted in about 50% of the group raising their eventual GCSE results above those predicted earlier. A similar, though less rigorous process operates with Sixth Form pupils. Those joining the school at the age of 16 are welcomed and integrated through the three-day induction conference, to which current Sixth Formers contribute.

45. Behaviour is monitored effectively. There is a clear and consistent series of rewards and sanctions, which escalate in stages, coupled with the Code of Conduct which is widely displayed and understood. The anti-bullying policy has been adopted across de Ferrers and the other schools in partnership with it, and considerable work is done in PSE lessons on topics such as bullying, drugs awareness and smoking. The external nurse is very effective in teaching PSE lessons and helping out with worries. Pupils feel that the school is generally a safe and happy place and they know where to turn for help of different kinds.

46. Attendance is carefully and consistently monitored by using an electronic system. The attendance policy sets high expectations and is understood by everyone. Registration is taken regularly and efficiently, with clear procedures for dealing with lateness and absence. Good attendance is rewarded by certificates. Form time is sometimes well used, but more often not well used for pastoral matters, tending to consist only of routine administrative matters, followed by chatting amongst the pupils, unless specific tasks are set by year heads.

47. Child protection procedures are in place but are not yet wholly satisfactory. They should be strengthened so that all staff, including support staff, know the designated teacher and the procedures to

follow, involving as few people as possible.

48. In general the school takes good care of the health, safety and well-being of its pupils. The site manager ensures the smooth day-to-day running of the premises. Risk assessments and fire drills are carried out regularly. Most departments use safe working practices, although all staff should ensure that pupils always use safety equipment when working with machines. Eating arrangements are clean and well managed. Sick or injured children have access to people with first aid qualifications, including a full-time school nurse and welfare rooms. The lack of lockers means that many children are forced to carry bags and coats around with them all day. The large number of pupils at the Dove campus are confined in a space which is too small for them, with consequent problems of litter, crowd control and lack of exercise opportunities.

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

49. The school provides much information for parents and aims to involve them closely, particularly at transition points such as entering Year 7 or the choice of subjects in Years 9 and 11. The prospectus is clearly laid out. There are half-termly newsletters and a system of reporting whereby most parents get at least an annual report and a parents' evening, and in certain key years such as 9, 11 and 13 they also get a brief interim report on their children's progress. Reports are generally clear and detailed, but in some cases targets set by teachers are vague and imprecise, such as, 'He should maintain his knowledge'; however, they generally contain National Curriculum levels or projections. Year 10 and Year 11 reports offer a comparison between the pupils' current working grades and grades teachers think they could achieve. The school has a standard set of letters to inform parents about such matters as poor attendance, detention and putting pupils on report. Year co-ordinators also field inquiries and concerns from parents and may contact them informally if the need arises: for example, if pupils need mentoring in Year 11, parents are kept fully informed. The home-school agreement is good and detailed, standardising expectations on dress, behaviour and academic work. Parents also sign the pupils' personal organisers regularly.

50. Parents are welcomed into the school to watch musical performances and sporting events. They can also attend interviews and induction sessions with their children for Year 11 options, careers guidance and Sixth Form choices. Liaison with feeder primary schools is particularly strong and involves parents closely. The Parent-Teacher Association is active in fund-raising through events such as the autumn fair and the duck race. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately included in decisions about their children.

51. Pupils are widely involved in their local community, which is another strength of the school. Professional visitors such as the educational psychologist come into school regularly, and many visits are offered, for example to Aberystwyth for the field centre and to Lichfield and Coventry cathedrals for religious studies. The work experience programme in Year 10 is very successful. Almost all pupils go out for a week to a wide variety of employers, many of whom have been involved for several years. Older pupils have the benefit of mock interviews with members of the Rotary Club and Soroptimists. Year 13 pupils have international work experience in France. The Young Enterprise scheme also has local business advisers. Sixth Form pupils do community service every week in local institutions such as special schools and hospitals. Pupils throughout the school are involved in fund-raising for charity. Year 11 pupils are particularly active in organising the Christmas party for local elderly people, including raising all funding themselves and providing the food and entertainment. The school offers a host of other activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh awards, sporting fixtures both with local schools and further afield, and significant musical events, notably the highly successful Wind Band. These help to develop mature, friendly and thoughtful attitudes among the pupils, and prepare them well for employment or higher education.



## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

52. The headteacher is providing very strong and effective leadership of the school. He is supported by senior staff whose various talents are appropriately deployed and by a Governing Body which is knowledgeable and effective. Middle management has been strengthened in recent years and only a few weaknesses remain to be tackled. The school is being firmly directed, with the backing of the staff, so that pupils achieve well and policies and priorities to maintain the school's strengths are implemented. The school has a culture of healthy self-criticism that brought tangible success in the 1999 examination results.

53. Reviewing all aspects of the school, and most importantly the standards being achieved by pupils and the quality of teaching, are central to the management's activities. The kind of reviews have varied and have been led by both internal and external staff, and all have been rigorous. Action has followed evaluation reports. The structure has changed. People have changed. The school is now embarking on a programme of moderated self-review by subjects, in which faculties propose different emphases and methods, receiving budgets to cover their review work. The programmes are being devised by faculties to match their agreed priorities and will furnish the school with different models. The school has a strong commitment to achieving improvements in all aspects of its work.

54. A weakness that is about to be tackled is the inadequate monitoring of classroom work, including the quality of teaching. This is understandable in the light of the school's very low income and the pressure that this puts on staffing levels. Plans to remedy this deficiency need to be implemented promptly and the monitoring should be carried out with rigour in accordance with the commitment to improvement through self-criticism.

55. Good planning is a strong feature of the school. The school development plan is an effective instrument for bringing the most important strands of school improvement together. There are ten priorities, a manageable number, with deadlines, responsible staff and resource requirements recorded. The planning, review and implementation stages are identified. Many of the activities to achieve the plan's goals are in the early stages, but the signposts give a clear indication of direction and the means of getting there.

56. The weakness in planning is at faculty level. Many of the faculty plans, whilst acknowledging the school plan's priorities, do not turn them into detailed programmes for the faculties, still less, in multi-subject faculties, for subjects. They do not indicate precisely what the subject staff will do, by when and at what cost, as their contribution to the achievement of the school's aims. They do not give the criteria by which changes are to be evaluated. These faculty plans are not the subject of agreement and then of rigorous dialogue between faculty heads and senior managers, as they need to be if they are to be effective working papers.

57. The last OFSTED report in 1994 recommended that the roles of senior management should be reviewed. This had not been done by 1997 when the present headteacher was appointed, but a senior management team and a faculty structure have since been created. The senior managers, particularly the headteacher and the two deputies with responsibility for the two campuses amongst their other duties, work effectively together. The faculty heads generally work effectively, but there is a need for heads of faculties embracing more than one subject to exercise greater leadership and to influence more directly the subjects that they lead.

58. The school's aims include the maintenance of a caring and disciplined school, the achievement of the highest possible attainment by all and an inclusive approach in which pupils can grow and be valued. These aims are being achieved. The school has a very positive ethos and good relationships. Equal opportunities are promoted and achieved, except that teaching does not always meet the needs of

pupils of differing attainment in the same lessons.

59. Statutory requirements are mostly met. There are some breaches of the requirements of the National Curriculum. IT skills are not systematically developed for some pupils at Key Stage 4. The Key Stage 3 history syllabus omits a major required component and has an imbalance of time spent covering other components. Religious education is not available to all in the Sixth Form. Acts of worship are not daily and do not, therefore, conform to statutory requirements.

#### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

60. The ratio of pupils to teachers remains high, as does the proportion of the week that teachers actually teach. Travel between the two campuses continues to be necessary. Nevertheless, these factors have no significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are, through their initial or subsequent training and experience, suitably qualified for their teaching programmes. Deployment of staff is appropriate to their experience and responsibilities. A significant proportion of the staff continues to have long experience at the school, but there is also a good proportion of teachers new to the school or the profession. This mix of experience is enabling the school to make secure progress in implementing changes in classroom methods, although some teachers continue to require support and guidance in doing so. Support staff play an effective and valuable role in ensuring that the school functions effectively. The experience and expertise of technical support, such as in science, remains good. Although they are relatively low in numbers, this does not adversely affect the quality of their work. Overall there is a satisfactory match of the number, qualifications and experience of teachers and other staff to the demands of the curriculum.

61. Much change has taken place in the organisation, management and implementation of staff development in recent years. Management and organisation are now good. Much greater emphasis is placed on identifying the needs for training and linking these clearly to the development needs of the school, department and individual. Training is making an increasing contribution to the effectiveness of teachers, although further support in key areas such as IT continues to be necessary. Newly qualified teachers welcome the support and guidance that they receive, both from their subject mentor and the school's induction programme. The appraisal system, successfully begun at the time of the previous inspection, has stopped functioning. The school made the decision that it would be better to prepare to implement the new requirements from government rather than to waste time and resources trying to rescue what it considered to be an ineffective system. It is in a good position to do so, when required.

62. Major building developments have taken place since the previous inspection, but significant problems remain and overall provision is still unsatisfactory. The school still has temporary classrooms, which are particularly unsatisfactory for modern languages on the Dove campus. Accommodation is limiting the quality and breadth of the curriculum in music, technology and physical education, for example. The physical education facilities, in particular, are inadequate to provide the range of activities expected in the National Curriculum. Some classrooms are small for the number of pupils in groups and this restricts the range of activities possible. Science facilities need further renovation to support the development of a broader range of teaching methods. Some corridors are narrow, with large numbers of pupils using them at lesson changeovers. Positive attitudes and good behaviour mean that this problem rarely develops beyond congestion. The general condition of the school is good, with little graffiti or careless damage.

63. There has been a significant rise in expenditure on learning resources in recent years. Overall levels of equipment and textbooks are now satisfactory, although some gaps remain. Textbooks for Key Stage 4 science are still in relatively short supply, as are more modern pieces of equipment, such as digital meters (ordered before the inspection), which provide easier access for pupils, particularly those with lower levels of attainment. Resources other than textbooks are limited in geography. There is a need for even greater access to IT resources, for example in mathematics at Key Stage 4 and in music and English. There is no provision for computer aided design and manufacture in technology. The

flexible learning centres on both campuses provide an increasingly well-resourced and well-used facility to support the development of information skills. Appropriate use is made of other resources, such as the environment, through A Level field trips.

· **The efficiency of the school**

64. The school receives a very low income per pupil. In 1998-9 it was almost £200 per pupil below the national median of the previous year, thus leaving it well over £250,000 short of what a typical secondary school would receive. There was a significant increase for 1999-2000, but this left the school's income still substantially below the average. Despite this low income, the school's management has succeeded in eliminating a large deficit and is carrying a reasonable surplus forward to cover unexpected demands. The school has managed finances very well in difficult circumstances. Financial planning is good and financial controls are effective.

65. Within the constraints of a budget that is lower than most schools, the school has shown imagination and has taken difficult decisions. A balance has been struck between teaching staff levels and learning resources, particularly books and computers, with a recognition of the latter's importance. Classes in Year 12 are large this year as a result of more pupils staying into the Sixth Form than had been expected. These extra pupils do not attract the extra funding to cover their costs until the new financial year. The school intends to reduce class sizes when it receives the additional funds and in readiness for their entry to Year 13. Access to IT, the facilities for which have been greatly improved, is still inadequate. The accommodation is also very limited, despite some very good new buildings. The disadvantages of the division of the school on two campuses have been minimised. There are also advantages, particularly in the light of the very large number of pupils, of a division which creates groups that separately match the average secondary school for size. There is very good senior management and administrative contact between the two campuses, using a fibre-optic link installed by the school at its own expense. Earmarked funds are used correctly. The school is well administered.

66. The school has a very low income and is enabling its pupils to attain well in a good environment with a high proportion of good teaching and is therefore giving good value for money.

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

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

67. At the end of Key Stage 3 the pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. In the 1998 national assessments at the end of Year 9 - the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) – pupils' results were close to the national average at Level 5 and higher, with the ablest pupils doing particularly well. Girls' results were very close to the national average, with boys' slightly higher. The proportion of pupils scoring Level 5 and higher was broadly in line with those in similar schools, while the proportion gaining Level 6 was high. In 1999 results fell for Level 5 and above, and more significantly at Level 6, although the results for both 1998 and 1999 were a clear improvement on those for the previous three years. Results in English were better overall than those for mathematics and science in 1998.

68. In their written work and performance in lessons during Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate good skills in all aspects of English. Their speaking and listening develop particularly well, so that by Year 9 many pupils are fluent and confident talkers in formal as well as informal situations; they are tolerant and attentive listeners and their strengths in this area are beneficial to their reading and writing. They tackle with confidence a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, making good use of the improved facilities in the flexible learning centre to develop research skills. Year 7 pupils use techniques learned through the department's recently adopted programme for the systematic teaching of spelling to tackle unfamiliar words. Presentation skills and the use of drafting are taught consistently and the pupils' writing reflects this emphasis.

69. Attainment at GCSE is satisfactory and there is a good correlation between these results and pupils' attainment on entry to the school. Results in 1998 were abnormally low, with 49% of pupils gaining A\*-C grades. This is below the national average for the subject and the lowest in four years for the school. Results improved in 1999, with 58% A\*-C grades. The results of these two cohorts are in line with those of other subjects. In English literature, where only the most able pupils are entered, 93% gained A\*-C grades in 1998, compared with 99% in 1999. Attainment in lessons is good at Key Stage 4, where carefully targeted and energetic teaching enables pupils of all abilities to achieve their potential; the achievements of those pupils with least ability are especially impressive.

70. Results at A Level in 1998 were good. All candidates passed, the average grade was slightly above C and 57% gained A or B grades. In 1999, with a larger entry, the average grade was between a C and a D, with a pass rate of 97%. There have been minor fluctuations in the average grades over the last five years. The pupils' attainment at A Level in 1999 was slightly below the predicted level on the basis of previous GCSE grades. Attainment in lessons is consistently good. Pupils demonstrate sound subject knowledge and an awareness of the importance of the historical and cultural context of their texts. They use literary and linguistic terms accurately and talk and write fluently.

71. Pupils make satisfactory or good progress at all stages, in response to teaching that has consistently high expectations and gives good support. Attractive wall displays of pupils' work and displays of key words from the technical language of the subject help to create an environment that is stimulating and encouraging. Progress is most clearly visible during Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. At Key Stage 3 pupils with special educational needs receive good in-class support and are set targets for regular review. The more able pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress, often displaying enthusiasm and the ability to work independently. A significant number of pupils, however, make less progress than they might, because the work that they are offered is not precisely adapted to their interests and abilities. The range of abilities within the broad lower band in each year is large. In classes where the pace is

brisk, resources stimulating and tasks are broken down into stages, pupils respond positively and gain confidence. In a lower band Year 8 class, for example, pupils studied Victorian slang as part of their work on a play version of *Oliver Twist*. They enjoyed acquiring knowledge about changes in language by finding examples and then using them in their own narratives. Learning is less effective when teachers fail to adapt their vocabulary, schemes of work or classroom organisation to match the needs of individuals. The department should seek to disseminate more effectively those differentiated resources already being used successfully by some teachers. These would strengthen the admirably broad schemes of work and offer better access to the curriculum for pupils of middle to low ability. Accommodation for pooled resources is currently inadequate and this significantly adds to the operational difficulties of working on a split site; more importantly it limits the opportunity for curriculum development and a continuing attention to teaching and learning styles as a contribution to raising achievement. Positive marking and the effective use of self-assessment contribute to pupils' progress: many Year 7 pupils are admirably self-critical, while GCSE pupils have a clear grasp of the various components of the syllabus and how they might improve predicted grades. In A Level classes Year 13 pupils display impressive commitment to their studies and are able to make comparisons between texts, both within and beyond the syllabus. Pupils for whom English is a second language and those with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress, but there are instances of inadequate work from support teachers and assistants.

72. Most pupils enjoy their learning. On those occasions when a task is not instantly clear or appealing to them, they try to complete it and know that if they seek help they will receive it. In response to the lively teaching that predominates in the English department, most pupils share their enthusiasms with one another and with their teachers. The atmosphere in almost all lessons with all age groups is busy and productive. Pupils often display impressive self-control: a low-ability set in Year 11, for example, continuing silently with their writing while their teacher was momentarily outside the room. A lively Year 9 class was able to switch effortlessly from pair work to whole-class feedback.

73. The quality of teaching is good or better in three-quarters of lessons. It is satisfactory in most of the others. At Key Stage 4 teachers work hard to exploit areas of overlap in a crowded GCSE syllabus and to offer pupils a wide range of contexts, purposes and audiences for oral and written work. Carefully structured tasks, appropriate resources, good relationships and an effective combination of praise and high expectations support pupils of lower abilities. More able pupils are encouraged to work independently and to relate their study of literature to social and historical issues. The use of humour and a clear respect for individuals characterises some of the most successful teaching at Key Stage 3. In the Sixth Form teaching is consistently good – challenging and varied in style. A wide programme of extra-curricular activities contributes significantly to successful teaching.

### ***Drama***

74. Drama is taught as a separate subject at Key Stage 3 and is offered as a GCSE option and as part of A Level performing arts. The teaching of the subject in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Schemes of work describe a broad and challenging curriculum that aims to make pupils aware of the contribution of drama in our culture and throughout history. Areas of overlap with art and music are successfully exploited: music is used to stimulate imagination and at the beginnings and endings of lessons; pupils enjoy making masks and designing sets. Links with the work of the English department are at their most effective in the Year 9 curriculum, where the yearly unit on Shakespeare's theatre is used to provide more time, using active approaches, for the pupils' study of their SAT set play. Since the English department also makes a contribution to the teaching of drama throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, there is scope for further strengthening the links between the two disciplines through cross-faculty discussion about teaching and learning styles. The teaching of drama at GCSE and A Level is consistently good. Pupils display commitment, self-control and great enjoyment for their work.

## Mathematics

75. Attainment in SATs at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 was close to both the national average and results in similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving at least Level 5, the standard expected for their age, was above, while the proportion achieving at least Level 6 was close to the national average. Boys achieved better results than girls, although the difference was no greater than that seen nationally.

Results in mathematics were below those in English, but similar to science. There has been some fluctuation in results, with boys doing particularly well in 1997. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and higher were similar in 1998 and 1999, but the proportion achieving Level 6 and higher increased from 36% to 41%.

76. The proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C grades at GCSE in 1998 was below the national average.

This represented a decline in results from the previous year but reflected weaker results achieved by these pupils in the 1996 Key Stage 3 SATs. There was a considerable improvement in 1999. These results also showed a considerable difference in performance by gender, boys achieving much better results than girls, the difference being much greater than seen nationally. This again reflects gender differences in the 1997 SAT results; however, boys also achieved better results than girls in 1998, although there had been little difference in their SAT results in 1996.

77. Two classes of pupils are identified at the start of Year 9 for early entry to GCSE at the end of Year 10. The result of this is that fewer pupils achieve the highest grades than would if the examination were taken in Year 11. This makes the comparison between each pupil's performance in mathematics and their performance in other subjects difficult. These early-entry pupils sit GCSE in statistics at the end of Year 11. All pupils gained an A\*-C grade in 1999, a considerable improvement over the 1998 results.

78. Results at A Level fell between 1995 and 1997, but have subsequently improved to the previous high level. The average points score and the proportion pupils achieving a grade A or B were below the national averages in 1998 but increased considerably in 1999.

79. The pupils' attainment in lessons and as seen from a scrutiny of their work does not fully reflect the most recent test and examination results. This is largely because the teaching of the important aspect of using and applying mathematics is given insufficient attention in many classes. Standards are broadly average at Key Stages 3 and 4, and above average in the Sixth Form.

80. Number skills are satisfactory overall but develop more by their regular use than through specific classroom activities either in mathematics lessons or in other subjects. Formal written methods are handled more confidently than mental arithmetic, some pupils relying too heavily on the calculator when performing simple calculations. The recently appointed numeracy co-ordinator has the brief to plan future developments. Pupils work confidently from Year 7 with whole numbers, decimals and fractions. They have a good understanding of place value and can use this when estimating or approximating answers that they have obtained.

81. Pupils begin to use algebraic notation in Year 7 and by the end of Key Stage 3 many can solve equations, with some higher-attaining pupils being able to re-arrange formulae. These skills are developed at Key Stage 4 and give a good grounding for those studying mathematics at A Level in the Sixth Form. Pupils at Key Stage 3 understand the symmetry and angle properties of two-dimensional shapes and the various units of measure in the metric system. Some are introduced to trigonometry in Year 9, applying their skills to the solution of problems in both two and three-dimensions at Key Stage 4. Pupils throughout the school handle data well, being able to present and analyse their findings accurately and interpreting their results more clearly as they move through the school.

82. The progress that pupils make in lessons is usually at least satisfactory, often good and, at times, very good. This is largely because of the clarity of teachers' explanations, the briskness with which lessons are taught and the positive approach of pupils to the subject. Teaching is usually at least satisfactory, with a high proportion being either good or very good. Pupils develop mathematical skills well and can use them to solve routine problems. Their understanding, however, develops at a slower rate even in the early-entry GCSE groups. There is a tendency for teachers to concentrate on teaching the skills and techniques associated with the subject at the expense of the development of pupils' mathematical understanding. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to use and apply their mathematics to investigations and the solution of complex problems. Set against this is the very good progress made in lessons and over time in the Sixth Form. This is largely made possible by the enthusiasm generated by teachers, their high expectations and the demands made on the pupils to think carefully about their work. The majority of pupils accept and rise well to this challenge. Slower progress is being made both in lessons and over time by pupils in Years 7 and 8. The good qualities of the teaching here lose some of their impact because teachers do not recognise and acknowledge the wide range of prior attainment in each class. This occurs particularly, but by no means exclusively, in the lower band where materials and strategies are not adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs or to challenge the more able. Although pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall in the school, they make unsatisfactory progress in Years 7 and 8. Most pupils with English as a second language make satisfactory progress, but there are some who do not as a result of inadequate expertise by support staff or insufficient joint planning between them and the class teachers.

83. Pupils throughout the school have a positive attitude to their mathematics lessons. They respond well to the brisk and confident teaching that they receive. They are generally very attentive of their teachers' explanations and instructions. They listen carefully and with respect to the contributions of others in the class. When prompted and directly asked questions by teachers they answer clearly, but many prefer to wait to be asked rather than offering answers themselves. In some lessons teachers simply do not encourage pupils to participate in question and answer sessions. Many pupils choose to discuss their work with a partner, sharing ideas and helping each other to solve problems and answer written questions. This is effective in supporting their progress in lessons. There are few opportunities, however, for pupils to collaborate in larger groups on practical tasks or investigations. Pupils behave very well in lessons and the vast majority concentrate and persevere with tasks and the problems that they are given. Care is taken over the presentation of their work and most pupils complete the homework set.

## • Science

84. Results in Key Stage 3 SATs in 1998 were above average both for pupils reaching Level 5 or higher and those reaching Level 6 or higher. They were also above the average for similar schools. The average level, taking account of all pupils' attainment, was close to the national average and close to that in similar schools. This is below the attainment in English, but very similar to that in mathematics. The average level over the three-year period from 1996 to 1998 is above the national average for the same period. This is above performance in both English and mathematics at the school. There was a small drop in the results in 1999. The proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C grades at GCSE in 1998 was well below the national average. This performance was comparable to that in mathematics, but below that in English. There was a significant improvement in results in 1999, with an additional 15% of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade compared with 1998. In 1999 boys outperformed girls. The average points score in the three A Level subjects showed considerable variation in 1998, with biology and physics being well below the national figure and chemistry more in line. A fifth of all entries did not result in a pass grade. There was again a significant improvement in grades in 1999 in all three subjects, but especially chemistry; however, a fifth of science entries still did not result in a pass grade.

85. The pupils' attainment in lessons is in line with the 1999 examination and test results at all key stages. There are examples of very high individual attainment, such as Year 9 pupils developing an understanding of atomic structure, how the arrangement of electrons builds up and the consequences for periodicity and reactivity. There is a very wide spread of attainment in each year group. Pupils in Year 11, for example, can describe various body systems, including some idea of their functions. Most pupils understand that respiration takes place in cells and produces carbon dioxide as a waste product. Higher-attaining pupils understand the connections between various body systems and can use their knowledge to explain changes that occur during physical activity. Attainment in lessons is similar across the range of sciences taught, as well as in experimental and investigative science. The pupils' practical skills are generally good. Other key skills, including literacy and numeracy, are very variable, but usually sufficiently well developed to support learning in science. A more consistent approach to supporting the development of these skills needs to be developed. There is also a need to develop the pupils' skills in using information technology to collect and analyse data. Pupils with English as a second language are not always receiving effective support.

86. The pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and experimental skills. This is true across all year groups. Sometimes a support teacher enables pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in lessons, although on other occasions the class teacher needs to be more directive of the support available. As in a Year 10 lesson on distance / time graphs, a combination of effective teaching and an interested and committed response from the pupils produces good progress in a third of lessons. More usually, in over half the lessons, progress is satisfactory, but it is unsatisfactory in a small number of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4. In these lessons a significant minority of pupils takes time to settle into the lesson or to complete activities with sufficient vigour. Sometimes, despite sound interventions from the teacher, insufficient progress is therefore made. The system that the school uses to measure progress from Year 9 to Year 11 showed that in 1999 the pupils overall did not make the progress that they should have done at Key Stage 4. This was particularly so in middle and lower-attaining sets. Similar systems at A Level show that overall the pupils made the progress expected, although more in chemistry and less in biology. The curriculum arrangements at Key Stage 3 result in teachers seeing pupils for only one lesson per week, making it more difficult to provide continuity and slowing overall progress in some classes.

87. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good at both key stages and in the Sixth Form. Many pupils enjoy science and some, as in a lesson exploring atomic structure, are developing intellectual curiosity and stimulation through the subject. A good number of younger pupils attend the lunchtime science club. Generally pupils are supportive of each other and engage willingly in collaborative group work. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other, behave safely and enjoy their activities. Pupils are courteous, polite and trustworthy. They take responsibility, work independently and show initiative. They organise well for practical activities, and equipment is treated with care. Most pupils develop their capacity for personal study well, although more opportunity needs to be provided to develop independence and initiative in some classes. Poor attitudes are, however, the significant factor in limiting progress where this is unsatisfactory.

88. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good or, as in a Year 10 lesson looking at various body systems, very good in over a third of lessons. It is unsatisfactory in a small number of lessons where teachers have yet to develop the full range of management strategies required to ensure that more reluctant learners participate more effectively. Pupils are more usually managed well. When at its best, the teaching is demanding and challenging and conducted at a brisk but not over-quick pace. There is a clear focus on learning and developing the pupils' understanding. The teaching stimulates and extends higher-attaining pupils, whilst encouraging and supporting those slower to grasp key points. There are a few relative weaknesses in some lessons where teaching overall is satisfactory. The marking of pupils' work needs to be more diagnostic, pointing out more clearly the errors made and what can be done to improve understanding. More account needs to be taken of what the pupils already know or



think in order to develop their ideas. Even greater account needs to be taken of the broad spread of attainment present in most classes, particularly at Key Stage 3, with more focused support available for the extremes of attainment. A programme of routine monitoring of teaching needs to be established to remove these inconsistencies and so to raise generally secure teaching to the standard of the best.

## OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### Art

89. GCSE results in 1988 were well above the national average and A Level results were broadly in line with national figures. In both examinations the 1999 results were an improvement. Value-added data shows that pupils make progress at GCSE but at A Level they do not do as well as they should. Art history is taken as a separate A Level subject. Results are lower than for art, and pupils perform well below their potential indicated by the average scores they achieve two years earlier in the GCSE examinations.<sup>90</sup> Work done by pupils currently involved in all the examination courses is of a similar standard to previous years. Sixth Form pupils make good progress and their technical skills are well developed. They can work effectively in a variety of scale and often their drawings and paintings are vibrant and very expressive. The quality of their work is enhanced by good preparation and experimentation. GCSE pupils also make good progress. They understand the criteria by which their work will be judged and this results in high standards by the end of the course. They have particularly good observational skills and some of their drawings are exceptionally good. These skills give them a firm base on which to manipulate images and communicate their ideas. This was evident in the very good work produced by some Year 10 pupils who were making large pencil drawings after looking closely at patterns on jackets. They were then able to enlarge and distort the patterns after selecting from a range of techniques and processes. The lower-attaining pupils in both Years 10 and 11 are also able to work well because each project is presented in a way which enables them to improve their skills and explore ideas. At Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, pupils have reasonably secure knowledge about artists and artistic style, although not all are able to express how their own work might be influenced by their studies. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations, and progress is satisfactory in lessons and over time. The work done in both two and three dimensions is at the appropriate level for the majority of pupils. Their work is informed by research, although the tasks to be done at home do not always provide a sufficiently demanding intellectual challenge. Sketchbook work improves over the key stage but the challenges presented do not always lead to pupils understanding why recording information and sketching are important parts of making art. The department plans well for pupils to learn about different styles of art. Some pupils are knowledgeable about this but the majority have not learned to be critical and evaluate their own and others' work. Across all year groups, the pupils' use of technical language is underdeveloped.<sup>91</sup> The pupils' attitudes to learning are good, and for some, particularly those in the examination classes, very good. The pupils are interested and are becoming serious artists; they concentrate well and respond to advice; many are self-motivated. Such qualities were seen in a Year 10 class involved in a project on Cubism. The pupils worked in complete silence, giving close attention to their still life drawings, and making adjustments after being taught to look at the shapes of the objects and the spaces between. Pupils respond well to teachers' requirements for them to become independent learners. This is seen in the way many can make appropriate decisions about the use of tools and materials and their choice of processes. Although Key Stage 3 pupils are not as focused, their response in lessons is satisfactory. Very occasionally a small number of boys are unable to remain on task and as a consequence they work at a very slow pace. <sup>92</sup> Teaching is good overall. It is stronger at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form where it is often very good and occasionally excellent. Very high expectations and effective discussions between teachers and individual pupils are typical features of the best lessons. In an excellent lesson this strategy was especially successful because pupils were given time to consider before they justified the decisions they had made about their work. The sharing of objectives with pupils is also a significant contributory factor to the success of many lessons. Key Stage 3 lessons have fewer strengths but are satisfactory overall. Demonstrations are clear, tasks are well explained but the teachers' interventions are more often encouraging than constructively critical.<sup>93</sup> The carefully selected projects ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses are met. In all cases they give pupils the opportunity to work creatively while they develop technical skills. Assessment procedures are good overall with several strong features. The pupils' progress is charted systematically. At Key

Stage 3 exemplar material is used effectively to help teachers make decisions on attainment levels. There are, however, weaknesses in the marking of their work which rarely tells the pupils what needs to be improved. At Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, the assessment of each piece of work provides pupils with a grade matched to the examination criteria. The positive features noted in the previous report have been maintained and the criticisms tackled successfully. A supportive yet rigorous method of observing lessons needs to be in place, so that the quality of teaching becomes consistently high.

## **Design and technology**

94. In the 1998 GCSE examination the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was in line with the national average. Attainment in graphics and food were well above the average. In textiles, attainment was above average and in systems just below average. In resistant materials, attainment was well below average. In child development, attainment compared favourably with the average for technology subjects. In the 1999 GCSE examination the overall average percentage gaining grades A\*-C was similar to 1998. In resistant materials and systems, results were much better than in 1998. In food, graphics and textiles, results were lower than in 1998. The results gained by the small number of pupils at A Level were in line with the national average in 1998 and lower in 1999. The three-year analysis of results for GCSE indicate that gains in newer subject areas such as systems and control balance losses in established areas such as food.

95. Standards observed during the inspection at Key Stage 3 are at least in line with expectations and more often better. Pupils use a variety of designing techniques and are able to work with a range of resistant and compliant materials. The pupils' understanding of basic concepts in food, graphics and textiles is satisfactory and often better, and pupils in general understand the processes involved, from identifying a need to the production of a final article. Food technology and graphics are strong while systems and control and resistant materials are undergoing considerable change.

96. Some improvement has already been achieved in standards in resistant materials. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning are variable and the inconsistent use of terms, for example in resistant materials, is confusing. The pupils reach a good level of manipulative skills and have a good understanding of the design process. There is evidence that designing and making, and focused practical tasks are now being supported by emerging activities to investigate, disassemble and evaluate, and are becoming firmly established in most areas of the curriculum. Teacher-driven design ideas, such as the garden trowel, can limit the pupils' ability to be creative, especially if introduced by finished commercial examples at the start of the work.

97. At Key Stage 4, standards in lessons and the pupils' work reflect similar strengths and weaknesses to those at Key Stage 3. The monitoring of coursework and of the pupils' progress is improving standards in most of the design and technology subjects, with the exception of resistant materials and sometimes in systems where programmes of study are not well established. Standards in child development are good. There are no significant variations by gender, ethnicity or need at either key stage. Attainment by pupils with special educational needs is sometimes high in food and textiles, for example when they were designing corporate items for the garden restaurant project. The school has decided to replace the current A Level, concentrating more on its strengths in graphics and it would be inappropriate to dwell on the most recent A Level results. Standards in Sixth Form lessons are high.

98. Progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 is always satisfactory or better. Good progress is always made in food, textiles and graphics. At Key Stage 3 the pupils make progress because the more open-ended tasks are appropriate and the pupils can become involved in the work. Effective teaching and classroom assistant support ensures that pupils with special educational needs make good progress, although material to challenge the more able is limited in all design and technology subjects. At Key Stage 4 good progress is also made in child development as a result of high teacher expectations and a good

combination of class teaching, group discussion and individual work. Progress in resistant materials is inconsistent at Key Stage 4 and is a cause for concern. Able pupils make good progress, applying sound analytical skills to the design process. In the Sixth Form pupils make good progress in graphics, using the Internet to support their learning. Progress in technology is variable and the course is unsuited to the ability of some pupils who do not always complete it.

99. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 the pupils' attitudes are in general satisfactory or better. Most respond well to the level of trust placed in them by their teachers. Occasionally their attitudes are unsatisfactory when some pupils are confrontational or when the teacher's control is inadequate. Most of the unsatisfactory behaviour is in resistant materials at Key Stage 4.

100. Teaching is mainly satisfactory at all key stages and is often better. Some teachers have a strong expectation of what pupils can achieve, but not all members of the faculty share this. Unsatisfactory teaching results mainly from a desire to hold on to a dominant skills-based approach which allows insufficient scope for the analysis, planning, design and evaluation aspects required in modern technology teaching. Teaching of systems and control is sometimes unsatisfactory. The work involves closed tasks such as the design of a garden trowel. In resistant materials pupils were provided with an excellent opportunity to understand the nature of industrial production and assembly line techniques in a project to produce a flat-pack bird's nesting box. The mix of teaching styles in Key Stage 4 graphics and the involvement of the pupils in their work produce good learning opportunities for the pupils.

101. In the Sixth Form, the graphics course attracts girls and the teaching uses a variety of good graphical communication techniques to match the interests of both boys and girls. The teaching of technology in the Sixth Form is skills-based and pupils sometimes undertake over-ambitious projects that use commercially available parts, thereby limiting their learning opportunities.

102. The faculty has undergone significant changes during the last eighteen months. Strong leadership is providing a clear focus for future development.

## **Geography**

103. GCSE results have varied during the last three years but are broadly in line with national expectations. In 1998 39% of pupils gained grades A\*-C against a national average of around 50%. 1997 and 1999 results were significantly better at 61% and 60% respectively. The 1999 results, however, show that pupils entered for geography did worse in this subject than in the average of all their other subjects. At A Level the pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. In 1998 62.5% pupils gained A-B grades, well above the national average. In 1999 there was a big drop to under 30% at A-B, with a larger entry. Nonetheless, the 1999 results show that pupils had made much more progress in geography from their GCSE attainment levels than pupils did in most other A Level subjects. At Key Stage 3 the pupils' attainment is also broadly in line with the national average. Differences in attainment between classes at Key Stages 3 and 4 are generally a reflection of the setting system. For example upper band Year 9 pupils could explain at length, using correct geographical terms, the different indicators used to measure a country's level of development, whereas many lower band pupils had limited understanding.

104. Attainment in lessons and in the pupils' written work is highest when pupils are involved in practical tasks and their understanding is secure. Year 7 pupils who created accurate sketch maps of the area around the school could clearly explain the process and the problems they encountered. Year 8 lower band pupils who had recently engaged in river measurements were able to describe their methods and results and had clearly gained much from the work. Good progress in the first weeks of the GCSE course was demonstrated by a Year 10 class who were all keen and able to answer questions on coastal

processes, landforms and coastal protection methods during a revision lesson.

105. Standards of literacy are currently satisfactory, with speaking and listening skills better developed than written skills in geography. There are few opportunities for able pupils to write at length and too few strategies to help the weakest pupils write in a structured way. Note-making skills are well developed. Pupils have sufficient number and graphical skills to support their work in geography, although their ability to draw a variety of graphs is better than their understanding of the finished product. Year 8 pupils drew river cross sections, both by hand and using Excel, but many pupils of all abilities were unclear about which part of the graph was the actual river. Year 12 pupils struggled to explain a graph drawn to demonstrate atmospheric lapse rates.

106. The department is beginning to use IT to support pupils' learning in geography but this is an aspect that needs development. Pupils wordprocess brochures about Burton in Year 7 and use Excel to draw a variety of graphs to show fieldwork results. Many pupils use home and school facilities for research into topics for homework.

107. Pupils generally make satisfactory or better progress both in the lessons observed and over time; however, in a significant number of lessons pupils make unsatisfactory progress because the teacher sets inappropriate tasks or does not ensure that understanding is secure. One Year 9 class who were studying Japan were given a second task easier than the task that they had successfully covered earlier, whilst an upper band class spent too large a part of the lesson shading in a map of Japan. The most able pupils in both bands make less progress than they should because they are rarely challenged sufficiently, either by the task or by the teacher's expectations. Schemes of work need to show opportunities for extension exercises and resources developed to support learning at all abilities at Key Stages 3 and 4. There is little difference in attainment by gender.

108. Good progress is made when teachers give quality explanations and then follow it with a practical activity to re-inforce understanding. The teacher of a Year 10 class drew on the pupils' Key Stage 3 knowledge of hydrology, explained the effects that humans have on hydrological systems and then asked pupils to draw a diagram to explain their understanding. Pupils also make good progress because they are attentive and sustain concentration throughout the lesson. When given the opportunity they work well in paired or group tasks, and able pupils cope well with tasks which allow them to work independently and to show initiative. There are, however, too few such learning activities written into schemes of work, which generally lack detail.

109. Most teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good but there is also some unsatisfactory teaching when teachers do not check that their pupils have sufficient challenge from the tasks that they set or understanding of the outcomes. Teachers mark effectively, although there is some inconsistency at Key Stage 4 where some classwork is not marked.

## **History**

110. Results at GCSE have been mostly above the national average in the last four years. In 1998 they were close to the average but the 1999 results were a big improvement. Attainment at A Level has been of the same order in the past two years, with high pass rates and a higher percentage of grades A and B than the national average.

111. At Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with national expectations. Year 9 pupils have a good knowledge of the industrial revolution and political developments in the nineteenth century but their knowledge of the twentieth century is more limited, because of unequal time devoted to studying these two periods of history. Their project work on the development of towns in the last century shows good

language skills and ability to select and organise historical information into structured reports. The pupils are able to use historical sources to find information and are developing the skills of critical analysis to determine the reliability of such evidence. Their understanding of the reasons for different interpretations of historical events and people is less well developed. In lessons on the development of railways, pupils showed an understanding of cause and effect, assessing the impact of railways on the country's economy.

112. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is above national expectations. Year 11 pupils know their facts and are skilled at making notes from a selection of texts, in one lesson explaining tensions in the Cold War and, in another, successfully comparing policies of Hoover and Roosevelt for ending the Depression. Their analysis of historical sources, such as political cartoons on the Treaty of Versailles, shows good understanding of the line of argument, informed by sound background knowledge, although they are inclined to include too much narrative in their answers. Coursework assignments and essay work show the necessary degree of understanding and analysis required at this level, and the language skills to read texts and write intelligently.

113. Attainment in the Sixth Form is also higher than that expected nationally. Topics are well researched and essays show a high level of understanding. In a Year 13 lesson on radicalism in Britain during the French Revolution, pupils showed their knowledge of the political situation by identifying the provenance of historical sources and evaluating the arguments in them.

114. Pupils are making satisfactory progress overall at Key Stage 3. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress where the work is challenging, as in a Year 7 lesson on Roman villas, where they had to produce an estate agent's report. Some lessons in the upper band were pitched too low, demanding only descriptive accounts or not including enough material, so that pupils were unable to make progress at the rate expected. Tasks need to be more closely matched to pupils' attainment in the two bands. Lower-attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress, helped by a clear focus to lessons, as in a Year 8 lesson highlighting the causes of the Armada's failure and recording them on a diagram.

115. Pupils make good progress overall on the GCSE course. The highly structured nature of the lessons in Year 10 gives pupils a sound training in note-taking and use of source material. The pace of lessons is sometimes laboured, with an emphasis on teacher-directed work. Progress is better in Year 11 lessons, where pupils are more independent learners, skimming texts for information and being encouraged to think for themselves, rather than wait to be told. Progress is assisted by the careful teaching of the skills needed to analyse historical sources and plenty of practice in answering examination questions. Sixth Form pupils are progressing well on the A Level course. Year 12 pupils are gaining research skills right from the start, analysing census returns and local records, and making group presentations on industrial pioneers from the nineteenth century.

116. Pupils display good attitudes towards learning in history. Interest is widespread, from Year 7 pupils examining Roman armour to Year 12 pupils' enthusiastic presentations on aspects of the industrial revolution. Pupils settle quickly to work and concentrate well in lessons. Project work develops their capacity for personal study, as does regular homework. Apart from some collaboration in pairs, there is little interaction in lessons. The number of pupils opting for history at GCSE has fallen this year, as a result of increasing competition in the option pools, but the number for A Level has increased. Pupils bring a serious approach to their work on examination courses and co-operate with their teachers. The standard of behaviour in lessons is generally very good.

117. The quality of teaching is mostly good and it is very good in one in four lessons. It was unsatisfactory only in one lesson, where the work set was not sufficiently demanding for higher-attaining pupils. Teachers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their teaching and present information in a clear and interesting way. In the best lessons exposition is balanced with stimulating

pupil activities, but some are unadventurous, dominated by teacher talk and lacking a variety of learning styles. The skill levels of the history attainment target are not being used to any great extent in setting lesson objectives and matching activities to suit pupils at different levels of attainment. Teachers are making good use of project work to extend pupils' writing. The recent introduction of a range of common assessment tasks will ensure wider coverage of all five elements of the National Curriculum. Teachers' marking of assessed work is thorough and constructive, but the practice of checking for completion of notes is variable and often unsatisfactory. In their organisation of work and management of classes, teachers create the right environment in which effective learning can take place.

118. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection but there is still scope for improvement in the variety of learning styles offered to pupils. The curriculum also needs broadening, to give more time to events this century. At present, the school is in breach of statutory requirements by not teaching the study unit on a past non-European society. This omission also affects the school's provision for pupils' multicultural education.

### **Information technology**

119. At GCSE in 1998 the proportion of A\*-C grades was well below the national average but there was a very significant improvement in 1999. In GCSE business studies, which has an IT option, A\*-C grades in 1998 were above the national average and showed a further significant improvement in 1999. Pupils on the GCE A Level course achieved very encouraging results in modules taken in the first year of the course. Results in the IT skills courses taken in the Sixth Form are good.

120. All of the IT rooms and the learning centres in both buildings have been equipped with up-to-date computers and printers. There has been a large increase in IT provision since the last inspection report. This is making a significant contribution to raising attainment and promoting progress. Attainment in discrete IT lessons at Key Stage 3 is sound overall with some good attainment in Years 8 and 9. Many pupils in Year 7 who are beginning their first IT module are starting from a low base. By Year 8 pupils are using wordprocessing and desktop publishing with confidence, importing graphics and setting out documents correctly. They are also able to interrogate and amend a database effectively. By the age of 14 most are becoming effective independent users of IT. They are able to make appropriate choices between software applications. This improvement has been brought about by the introduction of an intensive module for all. Where IT is seen in use in subjects, attainment in lessons is mostly satisfactory and some good work is seen.

121. At Key Stage 4 attainment is good in discrete IT lessons and in lessons where IT is the main focus. Pupils use IT to communicate and handle information. CD ROMs and the Internet are used to good effect for research, providing up-to-date data for use in class and for coursework. There is limited use of IT elsewhere in the curriculum and the measuring strand is currently inadequately covered. In these regards the pupils are not receiving their entitlement to the National Curriculum and the school is not complying with those requirements.

122. In the Sixth Form, attainment on GNVQ courses is satisfactory and sometimes good. Attainment in lessons on the GCE A Level course is mostly good. There is much independent use of computers at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form both in school and at home.

123. Progress in discrete IT lessons at Key Stage 3 is never less than satisfactory, more often good. In some cases the least able pupils are constrained by their language skills in lessons where wordprocessing is used. In other subjects where IT is used progress is at least satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 progress is good and sometimes very good in discrete IT lessons. Pupils apply their knowledge and understanding in a range of applications and use their initiative when carrying out Internet searches.

Opportunities for making progress at Key Stage 4 vary greatly, depending upon options taken and this results in unsatisfactory progress for about half of all pupils who do not take a course which includes specific IT teaching. In the Sixth Form progress is never less than satisfactory and sometimes very good. In one lesson, groups used a variety of software applications when brainstorming to produce impressive transparencies summarising their deliberations. Many of the pupils taking voluntary IT skills courses have good keyboard skills.

124. When using IT, in all years, pupils are interested in their work, almost always have good concentration and are able to persevere with challenging tasks. They often use IT to develop their capacity for personal study. Behaviour is good. The pupils are able to work well in pairs and frequently offer help to other pupils in matters of software skills and knowledge. All pupils treat equipment with respect. IT options in GCSE and in the Sixth Form are proving increasingly popular.

125. Teaching in timetabled IT lessons in Years 7 to 11 is mostly good or very good. Objectives are clear and work is well planned with appropriate resources, some of which are available on screen. Able pupils are given opportunities to develop their work. Pace in most lessons is good. Teachers intervene sensitively with diagnostic comments when pupils are working at computers. Many lessons are effectively reviewed towards the end. At Key Stage 4, coursework activities are well planned and discussed in detail. Marking is up-to-date, and appropriate homework is set. Teaching in IT lessons in the Sixth Form is good. Where computers are used in lessons across the curriculum, teaching is, with few exceptions, satisfactory or good. The work in many IT lessons makes a valuable contribution to the development of literacy and numeracy. Staff IT skills are improving and there is a core of teachers who are competent in IT; however, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 must be given opportunities to develop their IT capability across a broader range of subjects in order to comply with National Curriculum requirements. Assessment procedures are insufficiently developed to take account of current IT use across the curriculum. In addition, although there have been significant improvements recently, the ratio of pupils to computers is still unfavourable when compared to the national average for secondary schools. It will need to be improved in order to provide access for all pupils. The management of this subject has resulted in many good developments in the past year and most of the points above are included in the current development plan.

## **Modern languages**

126. Attainment at GCSE in 1998 was similar to the national average in both French and German for the proportion of candidates achieving grades A\*-C. In 1999 there was a big improvement in French results, but none in German. Candidates were entered for Urdu in 1999, with 44% achieving grades A\*-C, a rather low figure. At A Level two-thirds of the candidates achieved A or B grades in both 1998 and 1999. German A Level results were poor in 1998 but very good in 1999. An unusual aspect of modern languages examination results at the school is that, in general, boys are achieving equally as well as girls. This is not the case nationally and is to be commended.

127. Attainment in almost all classes is satisfactory and in a large proportion of classes it is good. Attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 is equal in all four modern language skills. The constant use of the target language is accepted as normal by all pupils. Vocabulary acquisition and increasing language structures are demonstrated by many pupils at all key stages. Attainment throughout the school is commensurate with expectations at all levels. There is little variation in attainment by gender. Written work is generally of a high standard and most pupils are keen to do well in the language being studied.

128. Most pupils are making sound progress at all key stages in French and German. Gains are being made in the target language in speaking, reading, listening and writing together with increasing comprehension of the foreign language being spoken at normal speed. This is due largely to the high level of use of the target language by all teachers in the faculty. This aspect of the teaching is an



incentive to the pupils, from the beginning of their courses, to use the language when responding to the teacher. New material is mastered well by most pupils at all levels, and confidence in the use of the target language orally and in writing is manifest in most classes.

129. The pupils' oral response throughout the school in the target language is good. Reluctance to attempt oral responses in the target language is rare, and encouragement by teachers and other pupils is common. Most pupils are interested in and enthusiastic about the learning of a foreign language. Concentration is good in general as is behaviour in most cases. Relationships are, generally, very good and are conducted in a cordial and respectful manner. There are occasional examples of unsatisfactory behaviour.

130. Almost all teaching is at least satisfactory, with much good teaching. Most lessons are very well prepared and executed. The subject knowledge of all teachers is very good, and expectations are high for the full range of ability in most classes. The pace of lessons, together with class management and discipline, are mostly satisfactory. A very small proportion of classes tend to be rather boisterous which, in some cases, prevents effective teaching and therefore learning.

## **Music**

131. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is in line with and often above national expectations. At Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form attainment is much higher. Examination results at GCSE and A Level are very good, although comparison with national figures is inappropriate given the fairly small number of entries, particularly at A Level.

132. At Key Stage 3 pupils are demonstrating a range of skills in performing, composing, listening to and appraising music. A Year 7 class gave a very creditable performance of an ensemble based on a work by Haydn, showing their ability to combine rhythm and melody confidently and accurately. The development of such work was further demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson with pupils successfully combining rhythmic melodies with four-bar chord sequences following up with their own four-part arrangements of the material that they had used. A similar lesson given to a lower ability class was less successful as many pupils found the work too challenging and would have benefited from planned differentiation in some parts of the task. Class singing is of a good standard and progressive through Years 7 and 8. There is less evidence of singing as a developmental activity in Year 9. IT is not being used consistently at this key stage owing in part to a lack of sufficient appropriate resources.

133. At Key Stage 4 and A Level, groups are small but the musical standards of the pupils are high with many talented young musicians. The pupils are showing the ability to use their practical skills and performing experience to support both composition and aural appreciation work. Written work is well researched at both levels and presentation is generally very good. Most pupils also show a sound knowledge of the rudiments of harmony appropriate to their particular course.

134. Most pupils are making good progress, showing the ability to build on previous knowledge and apply it in new contexts. Progress is unsatisfactory in some of the Key Stage 3 lower ability classes where the work is sometimes too challenging and thus not always meeting the needs of some pupils.

135. Attitudes to learning are good in most classes. Pupils relate well to each other and the majority are able to remain on task when unsupervised, thus taking responsibility for their own learning. Many pupils work purposefully and with enthusiasm, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, and the quality of their learning is high. An excellent example of this was seen in an extra-curricular activity in which a group of singers meet four or five times a week to rehearse and direct their own activity both for their own pleasure and for public performance. The majority of pupils enjoy good

working relationships with their teachers and in most lessons are very well behaved. Apart from a small minority of less self-disciplined pupils, who find it difficult to obey instructions when using the instruments, most pupils respect these resources and show consideration for others when using them.

136. Most of the teaching is at least satisfactory or better with much very good teaching being observed. There is, however, a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Good teaching reflects well-planned lessons with materials matched to the pupils' abilities, good subject knowledge, a range of teaching styles to match the activities, high expectations and good pace. Lessons were unsuccessful when one or more of these factors was not present. The leadership and direction of the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer is excellent and pupils are receiving a valuable learning experience beyond the classroom.

137. The number of pupils attending one or more of the extra-curricular activities, such as the Junior Wind Band of 90 pupils, is impressive. Both vocal and instrumental performance is of a high quality and pupils are given the opportunities to perform in some very high profile concert hall venues. Although only 7% of pupils receive individual instrumental tuition in school by the music staff or a team of peripatetic teachers, many more have private tuition away from the school and some of these pupils contribute to the school's orchestras, ensembles and choirs. The department shows commitment to the musical development of pupils and has justifiably earned a high reputation in this respect.

### **Physical education**

138. GCSE results were above the national average in 1998 but fell in 1999. Value-added information indicates that pupils did as well as they should. The 1998 A Level results were broadly in line with the national average for the percentage of pupils gaining A or B grades. The 1999 results were better, and the pupils made good progress against their performance in GCSE subjects taken two years previously. Those taking the examination courses currently are achieving in line with expectations. Their performance is better in the practical aspects than in the theoretical. Their practical skills are enhanced by sound analytical skills. Although their written work is well presented, they are not always required to display their knowledge through extended tasks. The attainment of the majority of Key Stage 4 pupils who are not taking the examination course is in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum. 139. Attainment is also at the expected level at Key Stage 3, where pupils make satisfactory progress in a range of games, athletics and gymnastic activities. Their grasp of basic skills and understanding of rules and conventions allows them to practise and compete successfully, and their ability to apply what is taught ensures that they make gains from Year 7 to Year 9. High standards are displayed in netball and basketball by some Year 9 pupils who benefit from good teaching. Attainment below expectations is evident in the groups which have been identified by the teachers as the less able. Typically, these pupils lack sufficient co-ordination and movement skills and they do not make enough progress even though the teaching they receive is satisfactory. Across all key stages, pupils' performance is stronger in games than in other activities. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection. 140. Boys and girls are equally positive about the subject. Their good attitudes show in the way that they come to lessons prepared, in their care of equipment and the physical effort they put into the tasks which the teachers set for them. Additionally, their keenness to be involved in the wide range of extra-curricular activities demonstrates their enthusiasm to be active and extend their learning. In all years, pupils work effectively in pairs and small groups and they compete well in teams. An example of this was seen in a Year 8 hockey lesson in which girls worked hard, listened carefully to the teacher and tried to apply particular passing skills in a game. In situations where pupils need to co-operate they also work effectively, for example in gymnastics when they are planning to link movements on the floor and apparatus, and in rounders when boys and girls work well together to improve their batting and bowling skills. A noteworthy aspect of pupils' learning is their attitude to practice, where they co-operate successfully and work well when not under direct supervision. Their behaviour is almost always good. They are respectful and appreciative of others' efforts. When misbehaviour occurs it is usually low-attaining boys who are unable to concentrate. 141. The teachers in the department are very experienced

and they deal well with the wide range of activities that have to be taught. Lessons seen during the inspection were mainly satisfactory but a very large minority were good. These were equally distributed between the key stages. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, they are well structured to allow sufficient time for practice and they provide pupils with good technical support. Games teaching is enhanced by the teachers' ability to help pupils to understand how skills and tactics learned in practice fit within the context of the whole game. In the best lessons, the teachers' expectations are clear and they have a lively manner. Year 7 pupils experienced such an approach in an athletics lesson in which they were learning the different phases of the long jump. The teacher's enthusiasm was one factor in the pupils making quick progress. GCSE theory lessons do not include this approach and, although satisfactory overall, they do not provoke pupils' thinking sufficiently. Some teachers are effective at asking questions when getting pupils to evaluate, and some can increase their understanding by quietly speaking to individuals. Examples of this were seen in a Year 11 rounders lesson and in an A Level lesson where pupils were considering the factors which affect performance. Across all activities, demonstrations are usually clear, although sometimes teachers miss opportunities to provide a visual prompt from which pupils can model good technique.<sup>142</sup> The activities meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, but because there are insufficient specialist indoor facilities for the number of pupils in the school, the programme of study is not balanced. Furthermore, there are some unnecessary differences between the provision made for boys and girls. The arrangements for grouping pupils by physical ability and aptitude generally work well, but the planning and execution of lessons need to give more attention to the range of attainment in any one teaching group. Assessment takes place as intended but needs to be linked more closely to the specific learning objectives and the more general end-of-key-stage descriptions. The extra-curricular programme is a strength of the department. It provides opportunities for the higher-attainers as well as the less-skilled enthusiasts. The programme contributes significantly to the ethos of the school.

**Religious education**

143. Attainment in the 1998 GCSE examinations was a little above the national average and the provisional results for 1999 are a big improvement. High standards were achieved at A Level in 1998 when all candidates passed and the proportion of grades A and B was well above the national average. Similar results were achieved this year with double the number of candidates.

144. At Key Stage 3 attainment is above national expectations. Year 9 pupils have a very good knowledge of Christianity and know some key beliefs and practices of Judaism and Islam, and to a lesser extent Hinduism. They are writing imaginative reports on events in the Acts of the Apostles, that show understanding of their significance for the early Christian church. In a lesson on the conversion of Saul, pupils were able to explain how faith can change a person's life and reflect on changes in their own lives. Some of the project work on modern heroes of the faith is excellent.

145. At Key Stage 4, statutory religious education is limited to two five-hour modules in each year. This arrangement does not allow pupils to reach the standards expected by the Agreed Syllabus. Lessons focus on moral and social questions. Year 11 pupils, discussing crime and punishment, show some understanding of the principles behind sentencing but tend to use common sense solutions to case studies, rather than apply principle and religious teaching. Attainment on the GCSE course is above national expectations. Pupils have a good understanding of Christian teaching on moral issues and are able to evaluate arguments and justify their own position in debate. In one lesson on birth issues, Year 11 pupils, presenting the case for a number of interest groups, demonstrated their academic ability to research thoroughly and present their arguments in a highly articulate and persuasive manner. The same standard is evident in their written work.

146. Attainment on the A Level course reflects the standard achieved in recent years, which is above that which is found nationally. In their study of ethics, the pupils' written work and discussion on freedom and determinism show good understanding of the perspectives given by different schools of philosophy. Their files are kept to a high standard, containing detailed notes and good quality essays on each section of the course.

147. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3. Year 7 pupils have made a very good start in the subject, exploring their own interests and feelings and expressing their beliefs for a class display. Year 8 are grasping the main beliefs of Islam. Their information leaflets on Ramadan illustrate their good understanding of the purpose of fasting and they are able to see similarities with Christian observation of Lent. Lower-attaining pupils are progressing at the same rate, helped by suitable adaptation of tasks, such as a template of the Ramadan leaflet, and by teachers giving them extra support in reading and writing. Higher-attaining pupils are given access to a range of reference books to allow them to go into more depth on topics.

148. Pupils are making good progress on the GCSE course, adding the equivalent of a grade to their predicted performance. This progress is due to imaginative teaching, which engages pupils actively in their learning. Discussions and simulations require them to use their knowledge in a way that deepens their understanding. For example, Year 10 pupils are gaining good understanding of the work of Christian aid agencies by researching their Internet sites and planning a fund-raising campaign. On the statutory course, progress in lessons is satisfactory, but progress over time is limited by the fact that modules only operate for one term in three and have to make time for other activities, such as preparation for work experience in Year 10. In the Sixth Form, many pupils are unable to attend the lessons within the general studies programme because of timetable clashes. Year 12 students are making good progress on the A Level course, researching different practices over baptism and making impressive presentations to the whole group.

149. Attitudes towards the subject are good across the school. Take-up rates for the subject at GCSE have been high and success at that level has produced a large Sixth Form group for A Level. Pupils in Key Stage 4 appreciate the relevance of the issues under discussion for them and welcome the chance to discuss them. Pupil behaviour is very good in most classes.

150. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in one in three lessons. The teachers are all specialists in religious education and present the subject in a lively and enthusiastic manner. They set challenging tasks and give pupils confidence in their ability to achieve lesson targets. Their planning is meticulous from schemes of work to lesson plans, with a healthy sharing of ideas in the team. The teachers use a wide range of teaching styles to involve pupils actively in their learning and help them reflect on the relevance of religion in their own lives. Work is broadly adapted for pupils in the two ability bands but not so finely tuned for the different range of pupil attainment within the bands. Teachers enjoy very good working relationships with their pupils, which allows them to be adventurous in their choice of methods. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, but sometimes there is a tendency to prepare a homework assignment in a lesson, when it would be more productive to make an actual start on the exercise. Teachers give detailed feedback on assessed work, and are beginning to use the county's criteria for measuring progress in learning about and from religion. Regular assessment and constructive criticism on the examination courses are helping pupils to do well in the subject.

151. High standards have been maintained and even surpassed since the last inspection, and assessment procedures have been developed at Key Stage 3. There has been little change to courses, except for the addition of a second module of religious education at Key Stage 4. The Sixth Form course within general studies is still a token provision and one that many pupils cannot attend. The curriculum is predominantly Christian: about one-fifth of the lessons at Key Stage 3 explore other faiths, but there is no systematic treatment of other world religions in Key Stage 4 and on examination courses. This imbalance in the curriculum does not take sufficient account of other faiths represented in the school.

· **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

· **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

152. Twelve inspectors spent 181 hours observing 294 lessons, covering all National Curriculum subjects and other subjects. The lessons observed were chosen to ensure a spread across subjects, year groups and ability levels and to embrace all teachers. Much data provided by the school in advance of the inspection was analysed and a commentary was prepared for all inspectors on the basis of this data.

Much work by pupils was examined, both during lessons and otherwise. The work of representative pupils from all years was examined, in order to establish their standards and progress over time. Brief conversations were held with many pupils in lessons and around the school. Forms were observed during registrations and tutor periods. Inspectors observed assemblies and extra-curricular activities. A meeting was held with representative governors. Three governors were interviewed individually. Many formal and informal conversations were held between inspectors and staff. The headteacher and the registered inspector met at least once a day. The views of parents were sought at a meeting, by a questionnaire and by interviews. Their views were analysed, made available to all inspectors and discussed with the chair of governors and the headteacher.

· **DATA AND INDICATORS**

· **Pupil data**

152.

Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
1,775	41	152	186

· **Teachers and classes**

· **Qualified teachers**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	94.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	18.7

· **Education support staff**

Total number of education support staff:	25
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	696

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	80.3%
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	25
	KS4	23

· **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998
	£
Total Income	3,678,948
Total Expenditure	3,588,168
Expenditure per pupil	1,989.01
Balance brought forward from previous year	29,360
Balance carried forward to next year	120,140

## PARENTAL SURVEY

153.

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1,775

Number of questionnaires returned: 783

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	14.5	66.8	11.4	6.4	0.8
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	21.3	63.5	8.1	5.8	1.4
The school handles complaints from parents well	9.0	54.5	26.8	7.8	1.9
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	11.8	66.2	12.6	8.6	0.8
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	18.2	60.1	10.3	10.3	1.0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	22.1	65.6	8.2	3.2	0.9
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	24.4	62.0	10.4	2.6	0.6
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	15.1	63.8	11.0	8.6	1.5
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	11.3	63.1	18.6	5.5	1.4
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	10.6	58.2	20.6	8.1	2.6
My child(ren) like(s) school	19.6	62.4	10.5	5.5	1.9