

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Alderman White School**  
Beeston

LEA area : Nottinghamshire

Unique Reference Number : 122851

Inspection Number : 185089

Headteacher : Dr P Davies

Reporting inspector : Mrs J Greenfield  
7070

Dates of inspection : 27 September – 1 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708229

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 to 19
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Chilwell Lane Bramcote BEESTON Nottingham NG9 3DU
Telephone number :	(0115) 9170424
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Name of chair of governors :	Mr G Upton
Date of previous inspection :	1 – 5 May 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mrs J Greenfield Registered Inspector		Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
Mr J Lovell Lay Inspector		Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Accommodation Efficiency of the school
Mr A Barringer	English and Drama	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
Dr B Blundell	Mathematics	Learning resources
Ms V Maunder	Science	
Mrs S Mansell	Design and technology	Staffing
Mr J Carnaghan	History Equal opportunities	Assessment
Mr J P Kirkland	Geography Special educational needs	
Mr B Downes	Modern foreign languages	Curriculum
Mr R Carvell	Art	
Mr J Royle	Information technology Music	
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- The school's overall results in the National Curriculum tests and at GCSE in 1998 compare well with those achieved by similar schools.
- The school is well led and there is a clear commitment to improving standards.
- The teaching is good overall and makes a considerable contribution to the often good progress that pupils make in their learning.
- The school has a positive ethos which successfully fosters and promotes good behaviour, attitudes and friendly relationships amongst the majority of its pupils.
- It promotes pupils' moral and social development well.
- It gives very good careers advice and guidance which is valued by its pupils.
- It has good procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and provides good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- It provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils.

## Where the school has weaknesses

- The undue variation in performance between subjects in the National Curriculum tests and in the GCSE examinations, and between boys and girls.
- The lack of challenge provided for the higher attaining pupils in some subjects and not ensuring that the lower attaining pupils have work that is more closely matched to meet their needs in some lessons.
- The provision for information technology at Key Stage 4 and in science does not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- It places insufficient emphasis on fostering pupils' spiritual development or in preparing them to live confidently within the ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary Britain.
- It has weaknesses in the systems and procedures for ensuring the health and safety of its pupils.
- It does not meet statutory requirements in the following areas: religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form; a daily act of collective worship for all pupils; the content of the prospectus and the annual report to parents; and the appraisal of teachers.

**Alderman White School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The weaknesses are outweighed by what the school does well. Many of the weaknesses have already been identified by the school and are being addressed. 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 and guardians of pupils at the school.**

## How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made mostly satisfactory progress in implementing the key issues identified in the last inspection report, but has not fully addressed sufficiently some of the other weaknesses included in the report, for example, pupils' spiritual development, the provision for religious education and collective worship. Attendance rates have improved although the level of unauthorised absence remains higher than average. The curriculum in the sixth form has greater breadth and balance, but does not include religious education, which is a statutory requirement. The school's assessment policies and practice have been appropriately developed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, although a small number of departments do not apply them consistently or accurately. The format of the school development plan has been improved and the budget is more closely linked to the priorities in the plan. The safety issues relating to the closeness of traffic and pedestrians at the approaches to the lower school site have been addressed and improved within the limitations imposed by the area.

The quality of teaching has improved as a result of the school's focus on this area. This is beginning to have an effect on pupils' progress, particularly at Key Stage 3, but has yet to affect pupils' attainment significantly in the National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations in all subjects. Standards at GCSE are not as high now as they were at the time of the last inspection and there have been considerable fluctuations in the intervening years at five or more grades A\*-C and A\*-G, although the average points score has remained more even.

The school has shown that it has the capacity to improve what it does. It has a clear view of its priorities and targets for further development, and is well placed to improve its performance in the future, particularly in relation to pupils' attainment.

## 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 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
-----------------	---------------------------	-------------------------------	-----



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

<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

Pupils' results in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1998 were better in English and science than they were in mathematics, and in all three subjects were well above the results achieved in schools with pupils from a similar background (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). In the 1999 tests, the results in English were considerably lower than those in 1998, but were about the same in science and much higher in mathematics. From pupils' current work, standards are in line with expectations in mathematics and science but below the standard expected in English.

The GCSE results in 1998 were below average when compared with the national figures but were above average when compared with similar schools. In 1999, the results were not as good at five or more grades A\*-C or five or more grades A\*-G but showed some improvement at one or more grades A\*-G. The strongest subjects at GCSE in 1999 were science, design and technology, food technology, geography, information technology, sports studies and performing arts. The weakest subjects were English, mathematics, art and design, history, French, German and textiles. From pupils' current work, standards are in line with national standards in science, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education, but are below the standard expected in English, mathematics, art, information technology, modern languages, and religious education.

The A-level results in 1999 were not as good as those in 1998. Most students gained pass grades but relatively few attained the higher grades of A or B. The best results were in English, with three out of the four students gaining grades A or B. In the GNVQ Advanced courses, both students gained a pass or merit award. Around three-fifths of the sixth form leavers in 1998 went on to higher education.

### Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, science, geography, art, design and technology, history, physical education, religious education.	-
Years 10-11	Good	English, design and technology, geography, physical education, religious education.	-
Sixth form	Good	English, science	-
English	Good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons; in 56 per cent it is at least good; and in 11 per cent it is very good and very occasionally excellent. There are examples of very good teaching in a number of subjects. The teaching in English, science, design and technology, geography, history, physical education, and religious education is more often good, and in the remaining subjects it is satisfactory. This consistency in the teaching contributes to the satisfactory and often good progress that the majority of pupils make in their learning. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurs in mathematics, science, modern languages, physical education, religious education and personal and social education. The weaknesses are mainly due to one of the following features: difficulties in managing pupils' behaviour, a lack of challenge in the work and unclear tasks, slow pace to lessons, and occasionally the teacher's inexperience.

*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	Good: pupils move in a sensible way around the school and most behave in an orderly manner. Occasionally in lessons, some pupils, mainly boys, do not always behave as well as they might.
Attendance	Satisfactory: attendance levels last year reached 90 per cent, but the level of unauthorised absence is higher than average. Pupils are generally punctual to school.
Ethos*	Good: most pupils are keen to learn and have positive attitudes to work. Relationships are constructive and purposeful, and staff are supportive. The school is committed to raising standards.
Leadership and management	Good leadership from the headteacher and the senior management team, and also from most heads of department, but there is some inconsistency in the way they undertake their monitoring roles.
Curriculum	Satisfactory: the curriculum is generally broad and balanced and meets most National Curriculum requirements; information technology is not provided for all Year 11 pupils and is not used sufficiently in many subjects to support learning; religious education is limited in Key Stage 4 and is not provided in the sixth form; the range and quality of extra-curricular opportunities are good; assessment is broadly satisfactory, although not always accurate.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory: when provided with additional support, pupils make good progress in their learning, especially in literacy and numeracy; in some lessons, pupils are not always given sufficient help to enable them to understand the work being covered.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good provision for pupils' moral and social development; satisfactory provision for their cultural development although insufficient is done to prepare pupils for life in a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse society; unsatisfactory provision overall for their spiritual development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory: sufficient qualified teachers but insufficient learning support and technical staff; accommodation is generally unsatisfactory, particularly in the provision for science laboratories and other practical rooms; adequate resources in most areas, although there are deficiencies in science, information technology and music.
Value for money	Satisfactory in the light of the pupils' lower levels of attainment on entry. Although pupils' attainment is below average overall, the school is helping most pupils to make satisfactory and often good progress through the good quality of much of the teaching and the supportive ethos within the school.

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

## The parents' views of the school

<b>What most parents like about the school</b>	<b>What some parents are not happy about</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems.</li><li>• The school enables pupils to achieve a good standard of work.</li><li>• Pupils are encouraged to get involved in more than just their daily lessons.</li><li>• Their children like school.</li><li>• The positive effects that the school's values and attitudes have on their children.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not all children are stretched to their fullest</li><li>• Some parents of pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 want their children to be at the school a little sooner.</li><li>• The inconsistency in the setting of homework</li></ul>

Inspectors' judgements support the views expressed by parents in the main, but find that standards in the school could be higher in some subjects, and that the higher attaining pupils and lower attaining pupils could be challenged further. The parents' concerns about the lack of information relates mainly to the long time that they feel they have to wait before they receive a report from the school about their child's progress in Year 7. The school could usefully consider how information about their progress during their first term in the school could be disseminated to parents. Inspectors found that homework is set regularly in most subjects and in some subjects reinforces and extends classwork well.

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve and build upon the current performance of the school and improve standards, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- raise pupils' performance in the Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations to a more consistent level and closer to the national averages, by:
  - ensuring in most subjects that the work for the lower attaining pupils is more carefully matched to meet their needs and that the higher attaining pupils are given more challenging work, and particularly in mathematics having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve;
  - focusing on improving pupils' writing and numeracy skills across the curriculum;
  - analysing in greater detail the relative performance of boys and girls in tests and examinations, and using this information more effectively in subject departments to inform teaching and the curriculum;
  - ensuring that pupils work more often in mixed gender groupings and that girls play a more active role in lessons;
  - addressing the unsatisfactory behaviour of some pupils, usually boys, in lessons;
  - extending the role of subject leaders, using more consistent criteria and approaches, in monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments.

*[Paragraphs: 8; 18-19; 22-23; 24; 26; 37; 39; 42; 45; 52; 63; 79; 80; 104; 106; 110-111; 113-114; 116; 120; 122; 126; 147-149; 166; 181; 185; 187]*

- improve the provision for pupils' spiritual development, by:
  - using assemblies more positively to develop this aspect of their personal development;
  - ensuring that all pupils have an opportunity to participate in a daily act of collective worship;
  - providing guidance to staff and ensuring that subject departments are aware of their role in fostering pupils' spiritual development.

*[Paragraphs: 58; 59]*

- improve the school's systems and procedures for monitoring and addressing health and safety in the school, by:
  - training staff in undertaking risk assessments;
  - undertaking regular risk assessments and health and safety audits which are then formally recorded in writing;
  - ensuring that all equipment is checked on a regular basis in line with health and safety requirements;
  - reviewing the systems for ensuring adequate first-aid cover throughout the school.

*[Paragraphs: 65; 67; 122]*

- ensure that statutory requirements are met in the following areas:
  - provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form;
  - the provision for information technology at Key Stage 4 and particularly in science;
  - provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils;
  - the appraisal of teachers;
  - the content of the school prospectus and the annual report to parents.

*[Paragraphs: 22; 43-44; 58-59; 76; 86; 155; 188]*

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan:

- improve the use of information technology to support learning across subjects of the curriculum [22; 116; 128; 155];
- improve the resources available for information technology, especially in English, science, design and technology and music [92; 108; 121; 135; 176];
- improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments in art, music and physical education, especially at the end of Key Stage 3 [50; 128; 175; 177];
- continuing to focus on improving the attendance levels of some pupils especially in Key Stage 4, and in monitoring and reducing the levels of unauthorised absence [30-31];
- prepare pupils more effectively for living confidently within the ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary Britain [57; 59];
- as soon as resources allow, address the deficiencies in the school's accommodation [87; 136; 150; 182].

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1. The Alderman White School is a smaller than average 11-19 comprehensive school, with 660 pupils on roll, 45 of whom are in the sixth form. Numbers on roll have remained fairly constant for the past two years but increased quite considerably at the beginning of this academic year and are projected to rise again next year. The school, which is situated on the south west side of Nottingham, is based on two main sites some considerable distance apart, with Years 7 and 8 in the lower school building, and Years 9, 10 and 11 in the main upper school building. Students in the sixth form attend the Lakeview Centre, which is based at one of the two other secondary schools that participate in the sixth form consortium arrangements.

2. The upper school is not situated within its catchment area and, unlike its surrounding area, the majority of pupils are from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds, both socially and economically. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, which has increased over the past few years, is around 24 per cent, a figure that is above average by national standards. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is 7.9 per cent, and 5.5 per cent, a higher proportion than in most schools, come from homes where English is not the first language. No pupil is supported under the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant funding which has replaced Section 11 funding.

3. From the standardised tests taken in Year 7, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average, particularly in their literacy and numeracy skills. Although the school has the full range of attainment there is a greater proportion of lower attaining pupils and a correspondingly smaller proportion of higher attaining pupils than usually found in similar schools. One hundred and ninety pupils (28.8 per cent) are on the school's special needs Register, which as a proportion of the total school population is higher than the national average. Of these, one pupil has a statement of special educational need, which proportionally is well below the national average. Around three-fifths of pupils continue in full-time education at the end of Year 11 and a similar proportion of students enter higher education at the end of the sixth form.

4. The school's overall aims are to enable pupils to achieve the highest academic standards possible and achieve their full potential. It seeks to do this through providing a broad, challenging curriculum, underpinned by high quality teaching and varied learning methods, within a secure environment in which pupils are valued as individuals.

5. The school's main priorities for the coming year, outlined in the development plan, include a focus on improving: teaching and learning; pupils' behaviour and ethos; curricular issues; subject leadership and management and monitoring and evaluation; attendance; assessment; information and communications technology; and key skills' progress files and the Youth Award Scheme. In addition, there are plans to improve relationships with parents and the school environment. The school has set appropriate targets as required for improving the academic standards attained by pupils.



6. **Key Indicators**

**Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3  
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	60	54	114

<b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	26	31	29
	Girls	39	21	18
	Total	65	52	47
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	61 (40)	49 (46)	44 (57)
	National	65 (56)	60 (60)	56 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	39 (16)	27 (20)	24 (24)
	National	35 (23)	36 (37)	27 (29)

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	21	31	30
	Girls	27	26	21
	Total	48	57	51
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	45 (39)	53 (47)	48 (57)
	National	62 (59)	64 (63)	62 (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	17 (19)	30 (24)	23 (28)
	National	31 (28)	37 (37)	31 (29)

*Note: the figures for the numbers of registered pupils are based on School Census (Form 7) information and differ slightly from those used to calculate the percentage of pupils reaching the threshold levels.*

## Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	50	52	102

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	18	43	45
	Girls	20	42	45
	Total	38	85	90
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	37 (27)	83 (78)	88 (85)
	National	44.6 (43.3)	89.8 (88.5)	95.2 (94.0)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	0	n/a
National		n/a

## Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>3</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1998	11	15	26

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	22.1	13.6	16.3 (14.0)	4.0	3.8	3.9 (2.5)
National	n/a	n/a	17.6 (17.1)	n/a	n/a	2.8 (2.8)

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of *such students* who achieved this qualification:

	Number	% Success rate
School	0	n/a
National		n/a

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of *such students* who achieved these qualifications:

	Number	% Success Rate
School	2	100.0
National		87.1

2

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

3

Figures in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year :			%
	Authorised Absence	School	8.3
		National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised Absence	School	1.7
National comparative data		1.1	

## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year :			Number
	Fixed period		54
	Permanent		2

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :			%
	Very good or better		11
	Satisfactory or better		94
	Less than satisfactory		6

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

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

#### **Attainment and progress**

7. Pupils enter the school with their overall levels of attainment below that of pupils of the same age in similar schools nationally. Their literacy skills and their numeracy skills are generally below average. The outcomes of the cognitive abilities tests, which they take on entry into the school, indicate that their scores are lower than average and that they do better on the non-verbal tests than on the verbal and quantitative tests. Up until this year, a lower proportion than average attained the expected Level 4 or above in the end of Key Stage 2 national tests in English, mathematics and science. In 1999, a much higher proportion than in previous years reached Level 4 or above, although without national figures it is not possible to judge how significant these improvements are.

8. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard of Level 5 or above was below the national average in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. At Level 6 or above, the results in the same year were close to the national averages in English and science, but were below average in mathematics. Over the past three or four years, the school's results in the three core subjects have fluctuated quite considerably. The results in 1998 at Level 5 or above showed an improvement over those for 1997 in English, were broadly similar in mathematics but were considerably lower in science. The unconfirmed results for 1999 indicate that at Level 5 or above the English results were considerably lower than in 1998, were broadly similar in science, but were much higher in mathematics. Some of these variations in performance can be attributed to the lower attainment levels of the different cohorts as indicated by their cognitive abilities test scores. When compared with similar schools, that is taking into account the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, their performance in 1998 at Level 5 or above was above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. At Level 6 or above, their performance was well above average in English and science, and above average in mathematics. The girls outperformed the boys by a high margin in the English tests in both 1998 and 1999. This position was reversed in mathematics and science in 1998, but their performance in these two subjects was more even in 1999.

9. Based on the average level achieved by all the pupils in 1998, the results were close to the national averages in English and science, but were below average in mathematics. Taking the three core subjects together, pupils' performance, based on the average of all the levels, was close to the national average in 1998, but over the three-year period between 1996-98, their performance has been below the national average. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the average level scores in each of the three core subjects, and for all three subjects together, have been well above the national averages.

10. From the evidence of their school work, pupils' attainment in English by the end of Key Stage 3 is below the standard expected for 14 year olds and broadly reflects the results of the Key Stage 3 tests in 1998. In mathematics, their attainment by the end of the key stage is in line with the standard expected nationally, and is better than the results in the 1998 tests would indicate, reflecting more closely the results for 1999 which have improved considerably. In science, pupils' attainment by the end of the key stage is also in line with the standard expected nationally, and better than the test results in 1998 and 1999 would indicate, reflecting the generally good progress that pupils are making in developing their scientific knowledge, skills and understanding. In other subjects, pupils' attainments by the end of the key stage in design and technology, geography, history, information technology, physical education and religious education are in line with the standards expected nationally for 14 year olds in these subjects. In art and music, their attainment is below the standard expected nationally. No significant differences were evident between the performance of boys and girls in their general classwork. When compared with the judgements made in the last inspection report, standards in the school have remained broadly the same in mathematics,

history, science, music, physical education and religious education, have risen in geography and information technology, but are lower in English, art, design and technology and modern languages.

11. In the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in 1998, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C was below the national average but showed an increase of 10 percentage points over the results in 1997. Based on the figures for the last three years, the school's performance has also been below the national average. At five or more grades A\*-G, the 1998 results were well below average, and were below average at one or more grades A\*-G. The unconfirmed figures for 1999 show that the school's overall performance has declined at five or more grades A\*-C and at five or more grades A\*-G, but shows an improvement at one or more grades A\*-G from 88 per cent to 98 per cent, thus exceeding the school's target of 95 per cent set for the summer 2000. When compared with schools with pupils from a similar background, the results were above average for five or more grades A\*-C, average at five or more grades A\*-G, and well below average at one or more grades A\*-G. The results were above average in relation to the average points score. Based on the average points score, the overall results for 1998 and for the average over the previous three years (1996 – 1998) were below the national averages. In 1998, the boys' results were close to the national average, but the girls' results were below average. This position has been reversed in 1999 with the girls performing better than the boys at five or more grades A\*-C. Since the last inspection, the overall trend in pupils' attainments, based on the average points score, has shown a downward trend whilst the national trend has been rising.

12. There are undue variations in the results in the different subjects. In 1998, the results for pupils gaining grades A\*-C were above the national average in design and technology, were broadly in line with the average in English literature, but were below the national averages in the remaining subjects, including English language, mathematics, science, art and design, geography, French, German, religious education, sports studies/physical education, performing arts, textiles and child development. The picture in 1999 remains rather similar to that in 1998, but there was a significant worsening in the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in English language and literature, French, history and mathematics. There has, however, been an improvement in the science results in 1999. In many subjects in both 1998 and 1999, a high proportion of pupils, more than is normally found, are not entered for the GCSE examinations. The school is taking steps to improve this position.

13. There are considerable differences between the performance of boys and girls in both the 1998 and 1999 GCSE examinations. In 1999, on the basis of the unconfirmed results, the girls outperformed the boys in English language, mathematics, science, art and design, in the range of technology courses, French, geography, history, information technology and the performing arts, but their performance was more even in English literature and German.

14. The work seen during the inspection in the different subjects reflects for the most part the standards achieved in the 1998 and 1999 GCSE examinations. Current and recent work indicates that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the standard expected nationally in science, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education, but is below the expected standards in English, mathematics, art, information technology, modern languages and religious education. Although there are significant variations between the performance of boys and girls in the GCSE examinations, there were no significant differences observed in their work during the inspection. In relation to the judgements made in the last inspection report, standards have remained at the same level in science, geography, history, information technology, music and physical education, but are lower in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, modern languages and religious education. At both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, these changes can be attributed to the marked differences in the cohorts from year to year as shown by their cognitive abilities test scores, the increase in the proportion of pupils on the school's special needs Register, and, in the case of some subjects, to instability and difficulties in staffing.

15. The average points score for the small number of students entered for two or more General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A-Level) examinations in 1998 was well below the national

figure. Since the last inspection, there has been a considerable improvement in the average points score, although the numbers entered for the examinations have remained very low. In 1998, all students entered for the A-level examinations in art, chemistry, physics, computing, economics, English, geography, German, physical education, sociology, media studies, and general studies gained grades A-E. Over a half of the students in chemistry, economics, English, German, physics and sociology gained the higher grades of A or B. The average points score in 1999, as yet unconfirmed, appears to be lower than the figure for 1998. In biology, French, history and mathematics, the proportions of students gaining grades A-E were below the national averages for these subjects in 1998. The results in each subject in 1999 were not significantly different from those for 1998 at grades A-E, but, other than in English, where three out of four students gained grades A or B, there were far fewer higher grades. In the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) at Intermediate level, all five students entered gained an award. In the GNVQ Advanced level, both students gained a pass or merit award. In 1999, all three students gained a GNVQ Advanced award.

16. In the sixth form, students' current and past work indicates that their attainment by the end of the two year course is above expectations in English, in line with course expectations in mathematics, science, and in the GNVQ courses, but below the standard expected in art and design and technology. Insufficient evidence is available to make clear judgements about students' attainment in other subjects, mainly because of the very small numbers taking the courses, and not all courses are taught at the sixth form centre or taught by staff from the school. Similarly, because of the small numbers, it is not possible to make any valid comparison between standards at the time of the last inspection and currently.

17. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are satisfactory. In subjects across the curriculum, most pupils listen attentively. Throughout the school, the overall standard of speaking is broadly similar to that found nationally. In art, design and technology, history and modern foreign languages, pupils are encouraged to use talk as part of their learning and for the most part do so effectively. When given such opportunities, pupils speak with confidence, work well together in groups and use such techniques as role-play effectively.

18. The majority of pupils read well enough to enable them to understand textbooks and other materials. In history, pupils read extensively and are skilled at extracting information from texts. In the GCSE examination course in physical education, pupils read widely for information. In design and technology, there are many opportunities for pupils to research for information. Elsewhere, in other curriculum areas, reading in a structured way is not used sufficiently to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. The quality of presentation and handwriting is below the standard expected. Much written work is careless and untidy. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils generally produce a higher standard of writing, with some good, extended assignments in geography, history, physical education and modern foreign languages. Note taking and drafting are strong in geography. No whole-school policy exists for the use of language across the curriculum to provide guidance to staff and ensure consistency of approach across subject areas.

19. Pupils' skills in numeracy are improving but are still unsatisfactory. Many pupils lack mental facility and recall of tables. Numeracy is used effectively to support learning in science, information technology, design and technology and geography. Whilst efforts are being made to raise overall levels of numeracy, this has yet to make a sufficient or significant impact across the school.

20. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are generally competent in using information technology but have insufficient opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills across the curriculum. The skills of many pupils in Year 11 are below the standard expected because they do not have the opportunity to develop their skills either through a taught course or through other curricular subjects. Although information technology is identified within subject schemes of work, with the exception of geography, it is underused as a tool to support their learning.

21. Overall, most pupils are making satisfactory and often good progress across subjects of the curriculum. Pupils at Key Stage 3 are making slightly better progress than pupils in Key Stage 4, although the differences are not significant. At Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress overall in science, design and technology, geography and history, and satisfactory progress in the remaining subjects other than in music where their progress is generally unsatisfactory. In music, pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons, but progress is less evident over time, especially in their knowledge and skills in appraising and composing. Similarly in art, although their progress is satisfactory overall, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists and the place of art in society are insufficiently developed or emphasised.

22. At Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress in physical education, mainly as a result of the teachers' enthusiasm and the challenging tasks they are given, and satisfactory progress in most other subjects, other than in mathematics and information technology where it is unsatisfactory. In mathematics, this is the result of the slow pace of some lessons, work that is not challenging enough, and pupils' weak mental skills, especially multiplication. Although the pupils in Year 11 following the GCSE course in information technology, about half of the cohort, are making satisfactory progress, the remainder make unsatisfactory progress as they have insufficient opportunity to develop their skills in information technology or to use it to support their learning across the curriculum.

23. There are several reasons why a significant minority of pupils are making good and occasionally very good progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. The most important of these is the generally good quality of over half of the teaching. In addition, most teachers plan their lessons well and use a variety of approaches to stimulate and motivate pupils. Together, these factors have an impact on the progress that pupils make. In the small number of lessons where pupils fail to make sufficient progress, this is almost always due to the unsatisfactory quality of the teaching and the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. Although there were considerable differences between the performance of boys and girls in the Key Stage 3 tests and the GCSE examinations, in most subjects there were no significant differences noted in the progress made by boys and girls in lessons, in their class books or other work. However, in history and design and technology, boys do not concentrate as well as they might, and in history the girls are slow to contribute, which affects their progress. In science and geography, teachers organise group work very effectively to overcome some of these problems.

24. The average attaining pupils are generally making better progress than the higher and lower attaining pupils, mainly because the work in a number of subjects does not always meet the specific needs of these groups enough. In history at Key Stage 4, for example, the teaching fails to address the wide attainment level of the mixed ability classes so that the higher and lower attaining pupils do not always make as much progress as might be expected. In the sixth form, students are making satisfactory and more often good progress in lessons and over time across the subjects that they study. There are no significant differences between the progress made by pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and their peers.

25. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress across the curriculum and in meeting the targets in the individual education plans. Where they receive additional support, they make good progress. This is especially true in language and literacy work at both key stages. Pupils withdrawn for additional work using an individualised integrated learning programme also make good progress in reading comprehension, spelling and numeracy.

## **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

26. Pupils' attitudes to work are, in the main, good. The great majority of pupils are well motivated and keen to succeed, which enables them to make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their learning. They sustain concentration well and observe the classroom code of practice for behaviour. A minority of pupils in Year 7 have not yet learnt to settle to tasks and to persevere with their work. In Years 10 and 11, a small number of pupils, usually, but not always, boys, quickly lose concentration and begin to call out and talk when the teacher is addressing the class. In a few cases, poor behaviour is associated with lack of challenge and pace in the lesson. Most pupils, however, show evident enthusiasm for their studies. Pupils with special educational needs generally have positive attitudes to their work, occasionally marred by lapses in concentration. They work well when they have additional support in the classroom. They integrate effectively into discussion groups and show interest in the tasks and activities they undertake. Relationships with support assistants are good and this helps to improve the progress they make. Sixth form students are mature and committed in their attitudes.

27. Behaviour in and around the school is generally good. There are narrow corridors on both lower and upper sites but pupils move about in a sensible way and wait peaceably outside classrooms. During break and lunchtime at the upper school, pupils queue patiently for their meals. The dining room at the lower school is a pleasant environment at lunchtime. In playgrounds and about both sites, pupils behave in an orderly manner. The school's system of rewards and punishments is well understood. For serious breaks of discipline the school excludes pupils on a temporary or permanent basis. There are few permanent exclusions but the number of fixed term exclusions is higher than that found nationally in similar schools. Those excluded are nearly always boys and the reasons for the punishment are all serious offences against other pupils and teachers or, more rarely, property. There is general respect for property, with little evidence of graffiti. Lockers are well used and pupils' work, attractively displayed in both sites, remains untouched.

28. Relationships are almost always constructive and purposeful. In several subjects, pupils work productively together in small groups. They appreciate the benefit of sharing ideas with others. Students in the sixth form achieve increasingly mature working relationships. When working together pupils show sensitivity to the views and beliefs of others. There is a good sense of racial harmony throughout the school.

29. Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided for their personal development and for taking on roles of responsibility, for example in the school council and as prefects. There is little opportunity built into the schemes of work for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils in Year 11 have discussed the possibility of forming their own anti-bullying groups to help younger pupils. In their work in expressive arts, pupils show imagination and creativity in developing their own dramatic presentations. Pupils involved in the Youth Award Scheme demonstrate considerable self-sufficiency. Students in the sixth form increasingly organise their own time and decide upon particular aspects to pursue and research to undertake.

## **Attendance**

30. Levels of attendance are broadly satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection in 1995, when attendance rates were 86.3 per cent. In 1997/98, the last school year for which there are national comparative figures, overall attendance at 89.2 per cent was below the national average, although 22 pupils achieved a 100 per cent attendance record and a further 200 pupils achieved attendance levels of 95 per cent or more. In the same year, unauthorised absence was 1.0 per cent, which was broadly in line with the national average. In the last reporting year (1998/99), attendance levels reached 90 per cent, which is closer to the national average, although unauthorised absence levels rose to 1.7 per cent mainly as a result of the school's more rigorous procedures before authorising absences.



31. The majority of authorised absences occur as a result of illness and sickness, medical visits and holidays, despite strong encouragement from the school for holidays to be taken outside term time. The school works in close collaboration with parents and the education welfare officer to monitor attendance levels and address areas of concern. An analysis of the school's attendance and external examination results clearly shows that pupils' attainment and progress is affected by poor attendance and that those pupils with good attendance usually achieve the best results in the GCSE examinations.

32. The majority of pupils arrive at school on time. Registration practice throughout the school is consistent and registers are marked efficiently and accurately. A small number of pupils arrive late for the start of sessions, and lateness is often associated with difficulties with public transport. Lateness is properly and consistently recorded. Throughout the day, pupils move purposefully between lessons and arrive in classrooms punctually. Lessons begin on time. Attendance in lessons is recorded and the school is aware of a few cases of pupils who absent themselves without permission from lessons.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

33. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is consistent across both key stages and in the sixth form, and across subjects. It makes a significant contribution to the satisfactory and often good progress that pupils make in their learning. The school has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching since the last inspection, reducing the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching from around 17 per cent in 1995 to six per cent in 1999. Over the same period, the proportion of good or better teaching has increased from around 50 per cent to 56 per cent. These improvements are due for the most part to the emphasis that the school has placed over the past three years on developing strategies for improving teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice. Teachers are now making more effective use of assessment to inform future work and ensuring a better match of work to meet pupils' needs, both of which were weaknesses identified in the last inspection report.

34. The teaching is at least satisfactory in all but a comparatively small proportion of lessons. Slightly less than three-fifths of the teaching is good or better at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching between the year groups, but there is a slightly higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Year 11 and in Year 8. There are no clear reasons why this should be so in Year 8, but in Year 11 it is associated with the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a small number of disaffected pupils who are difficult to manage. The teaching across the school is more often good in English, science, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education, and also in art and history at Key Stage 3. In the sixth form, the teaching of English and science is also good. In the remaining subjects, the teaching is generally satisfactory overall.

35. There are examples of some very good teaching in a number of subjects, including English, science, and religious education across both key stages, and also in mathematics, history, physical education, and personal and social education at Key Stage 3, and in design and technology and geography at Key Stage 4. In these lessons, pupils make particularly good progress in their learning. Some excellent teaching occurs at times in physical education and religious education.

36. Where pupils make the best progress, teachers use the following strategies well. They plan thoroughly and ensure that the learning intentions of lessons are shared with the pupils, as for example in a mathematics lesson in Year 7, in a history lesson in Year 9 and in a religious education lesson also in Year 9. They use open-ended questioning effectively to explore pupils' understanding and to challenge their thinking, as seen in a personal and social education lesson in Year 8 and in a design and technology lesson in Year 11. In the most effective lessons, teachers ensure that the tasks and activities are appropriately matched to meet the needs of the pupils and provide them with adequate challenge. They also make good use of the time in the lesson, and use the beginning and end of lessons to recall previous work, to reinforce

concepts and to provide positive feedback to pupils.

37. The weaknesses in the small number of unsatisfactory lessons are varied. They stem mainly from difficulties in managing pupils' behaviour, particularly evident in some Year 11 lessons in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, slow pace, lack of challenge or tasks that are unclear, work that is inappropriately matched to meet the range of attainment in the class, and, occasionally, the teacher's inexperience.

38. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Teachers use their individual education plans effectively when engaged in target setting in lessons. However, many teachers do not provide work that is sufficiently well matched to the needs of these pupils, and sometimes pupils have difficulties with vocabulary, especially technical terms, as well as understanding concepts. Where resources have been adapted, such as enlarged script for visually impaired pupils, the quality of their learning improves. Support assistants are involved in planning lessons and discuss individual needs with class teachers before most lessons. This helps to ensure that the support is effective and that most needs are met.

39. Teachers' subject knowledge is for the most part satisfactory and more often good. In the most successful lessons they generally use this knowledge effectively to provide work to stimulate and motivate their pupils. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are broadly satisfactory, although they are insufficiently demanding in mathematics, and are good at both key stages in science, design and technology, history and physical education, and in geography and music at Key Stage 4. In some mathematics lessons, teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve are too low, and consequently pupils are not achieving the standards, and fail to make the progress, of which they are capable. In a number of lessons in some other subjects, for example in mathematics, science, geography, history, information technology, modern languages and religious education, the work does not always make sufficient demands on the higher attaining pupils or fully meet the needs of some of the lower attaining pupils.

40. Most lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of the majority of pupils, and have clear purposes to ensure that pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding progressively. Careful planning in English, for example, ensures that the content of lessons is well matched to pupils' levels of attainment. Planning is also generally good in geography and design and technology, and in science, art and history at Key Stage 3. The objectives of lessons are not always shared sufficiently with pupils in science and the planning in art, especially at Key Stage 4, does not identify the learning intentions clearly enough.

41. Most teachers use a satisfactory range of teaching and organisational strategies, appropriate to the subject and to the content being covered, to interest pupils and ensure that they make progress. Teaching approaches are sometimes rather narrow in English and art, and on occasions there is too much emphasis on teacher-directed activity in music. In geography, the best teaching incorporates good opportunities for pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own work and learning. In the majority of lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace to ensure that the time is used effectively, although in some mathematics lessons the pace is too leisurely, especially when pupils are involved in individual or group work. Resources are generally used well to support pupils' learning.

42. Teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and in the majority of lessons manage their behaviour effectively. Some teachers, particularly with pupils in Year 7 and in Year 11, are not as firm with their pupils as they need to be and as a result pupils are inattentive and waste time, with a consequent loss of learning time. In lessons, teachers praise and encourage pupils and give them constructive and positive feedback on their performance. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory in nearly all subjects, but is less evident in physical education, with pupils given insufficient opportunity to review their work and to develop their skills of planning and evaluation. Marking is mostly undertaken regularly, but there is a lack of consistency in mathematics and science in the frequency with

which teachers annotate books and give clear direction on what pupils need to do to improve their work. In most subjects, homework is set regularly, and in science, design and technology and history, for example, homework reinforces and extends classwork well. In mathematics, the setting of homework is inconsistent.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

43. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced at both key stages and is mostly so in the sixth form. The time given for teaching exceeds the minimum recommended time at Key Stage 3 but is slightly below that recommended at Key Stage 4. Pupils at Key Stage 3 follow all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and a course in personal, social and health education. Since the last inspection, the time allocated for information technology, modern languages, physical education in Year 9, and music has improved. However, the time allocated for drama does not allow adequate coverage of the subject. Appropriate provision for the teaching of health education, sex education and drugs awareness is made within the personal, social and health education programme. Pupils also begin their careers education in Year 9. At Key Stage 4, all pupils follow a core curriculum of English, mathematics, science, a modern language and are able to choose from a range of other subjects including the Youth Award scheme. At present there is no provision at Key Stage 4 for pupils to follow vocational or short courses, which narrows the range of opportunities available for some of the lower attaining pupils in particular. The school is aware of this and has plans to introduce them in the future, although no specific date has been set. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not fully meet statutory requirements, as not all Year 11 pupils have access to information technology and the provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 does not meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. Overall, the curriculum provides a satisfactory preparation for the next stage of pupils' education.

44. Through the sixth form consortium arrangements, students have access to a wide range of A-level courses and a small number of GNVQ Advanced and Intermediate courses. The provision has improved considerably since the last inspection report when the lack of curricular breadth was identified as a key issue. Students in Year 12 undertake work experience, and have the opportunity to undertake community service and take part in Young Enterprise. All students have a tutorial session once a week and the students themselves consider this to be very helpful. No provision is made for religious education or for a daily act of collective worship, which is in breach of the statutory requirements for this age group.

45. Most pupils have equal access to the curriculum apart from some inevitable restrictions at Key Stage 4 arising out of the option choices. The balance between teaching mixed ability groups and setted groups is effective, and where pupils are grouped by their levels of attainment, there is sufficient flexibility to allow them to move as necessary between the sets. Nevertheless, pupils in the lower sets for mathematics are denied access to the higher level examination papers because of the sets in which they are placed and the low expectations that some teachers have of what these pupils can achieve. There is no provision for music in the Year 11 curriculum and pupils who wish to take music as an examination subject have to be taught after school. Information technology is also provided as an additional course at Key Stage 4 after school. Many pupils follow examination courses in ten or sometimes eleven subjects. This is a high number in the light of the generally lower levels of attainment of pupils as indicated by their Key Stage 3 test results, their scores on the cognitive abilities tests, and the comparatively high levels of pupils not entered for GCSE examinations.

46. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is appropriate in most cases. A small number of pupils in Key Stage 3 are withdrawn from some lessons to work with a programme of computer aided learning related to literacy and numeracy and this is helping to raise their attainment. Such withdrawal does not cause major disruption to most subjects, but it does help to ensure greater access to the curriculum overall. In Key Stage 4, the Youth Award Scheme is available in the option plan. In many subjects, aspects of the curriculum are inadequately simplified to ensure that pupils with special educational needs understand the work that is being covered. They find language and concepts difficult to

understand, especially where there is no additional support. Current arrangements to ensure that work meets the needs of these pupils in lessons are unsatisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well integrated into mainstream classes in both key stages. They have equal access to the curriculum, and their individual education plans are generally well used to support their attainment and progress. Some schemes of work, for example English, science and modern languages, indicate how pupils with special educational needs can gain appropriate access to the curriculum.

47. The planning of the curriculum to ensure that pupils' learning develops systematically from year to year is good. Curricular planning through departmental schemes of work is good. There are particularly comprehensive and detailed schemes of work for English, science, modern languages and history. The scheme of work for music is now being re-written to provide better balance across the elements of the subject.

48. Provision for careers education and guidance, which starts in Year 9 and is delivered through the personal, social and health education programme, is very good. All pupils have at least one interview with a careers officer, and the local authority careers service provides good support. There is a comprehensive and well-managed library that has extensive resources freely available to pupils. The careers advice given is seen by pupils as helpful and impartial. The work experience programme is very well thought out and organised, with very good preparation and follow up to ensure that pupils gain maximum benefit from the experience.

49. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities, including sport. Many subjects offer revision classes and there is a range of activities, including a school choir, information technology, art, bridge, a mathematics club, producing the school magazine, chess and a natural history club. Provision for extra-curricular sport includes table tennis, netball, football and hockey as well as competitive games with other schools, and there is a good level of participation by pupils. At the time of the inspection, rehearsals and auditions were taking place for a school production of *Guys and Dolls*. Local and overseas visits are arranged to enhance the curriculum in modern languages, geography, history and during Activities Week, and an exchange arrangement with a school in Germany is very successful.

50. The school has a number of methods of assessing pupils' attainment and in doing so meets current statutory requirements. Pupils are regularly assessed through the use of standardised tests, such as the cognitive abilities tests. Subjects also carefully assess what pupils know, understand and can do. There is particularly good practice in design and technology, where assessment leads to step-by-step guidance for individual pupils. Assessment activities are often accompanied by self-assessments undertaken by the pupils themselves. These are regularly carried out by all pupils so that they develop their skills in this area, and are frequently shrewd and honest in their judgements. Most departments keep thorough records of pupils' development. At Key Stage 3, subjects undertaking assessments against level descriptions generally provide accurate indications of attainment. However, there are considerable inaccuracies in teachers' assessments in art, music and, particularly, physical education, indicating a lack of knowledge and understanding about the end of key stage statements. Most pupils' work is thoroughly marked. There are minor variations in style but in subjects like English and history marking is regular, thorough and tells pupils how to improve their work. Most pupils respond warmly to this. Many departments hold portfolios of pupils' assessed work to exemplify standards, but this practice is not universal.

51. Assessment of pupils with special educational needs is good. It is thorough, with early identification based on relevant information from contributory primary schools and the school's own testing regime. Good up-to-date records are kept of all assessments. These are communicated clearly to relevant teachers, and form the basis of individual education plans or subsequent assessments. Statutory assessments meet the requirements of the national Code of Practice in full.

52. Whereas the school is producing a great deal of assessment data, it is not always used enough to inform school and departmental planning. There is a lack of detailed analysis of assessment information at

senior and middle management level. For example, data on variations in the attainment of boys and girls is available for all pupils as they move through the school and at the stages of GCSE and A-level examinations. The significant variations in performance that are evident have failed to inform either the school's equal opportunities policy or resulted in the modification of classroom practice. However, the school does regularly check pupils' performance in all subjects, and any underachievement is identified for the heads of year to act on. Data on the 'value added' by departments in teaching pupils is starting to be analysed but has yet to fully feed back into classroom planning and practice.

53. The school's response to the issues raised in the last inspection report has generally been satisfactory, although some aspects lack consistency. There is now a whole-school policy on assessment; the quality of assessment has improved although it lacks accuracy in some of the foundation subjects at the end of Key Stage 3. Marking has improved and assessment is now more closely linked to the requirements of the National Curriculum.

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

54. There are some strengths in the school's contribution to pupils' spiritual development but overall the provision is unsatisfactory. In science, pupils learn that human values and beliefs differ across a range of issues. English promotes personal awareness and understanding. In religious education at Key Stage 3 and in the GCSE course, pupils learn to use religious ideas to help interpret their own experience of life. In the rest of the curriculum and in assemblies the spiritual dimension is largely missing. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all is not met. Without the opportunity to consider the questions raised by religion and the different responses to them, aspects of pupils' spiritual development are neglected. The school does not comply with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. The lack of input in the spiritual dimension is a weakness for pupils as individuals and a loss to the corporate life of the school.

55. The school's provision for pupils' moral development is good. A strong commitment to moral values is embedded in the school's leadership and culture. Expectations of pupils' behaviour are widely displayed and for the most part consistently upheld by staff. Teachers are good role models for their pupils. Senior staff set an example in their respect for other people's feelings. Assemblies emphasise the moral dimension and its importance in the corporate life of the school. In many subjects across the curriculum, pupils are taught the principles which distinguish right from wrong. Moral issues are considered in the social education course but further opportunities for moral development are restricted by the limited provision for religious education after the end of Key Stage 3.

56. The school's contribution to pupils' social development is also good. One of the aims of the school is that through self-discipline and mutual respect pupils should move towards adult levels of social maturity. There are opportunities to be active on the school council and for senior pupils to take on roles of responsibility. In many subjects, pupils learn collaborative skills through working in groups. They develop an understanding of citizenship in history and geography. Teamwork is a feature of practical activities in science and physical education. The programme of social education is well constructed and benefits from the active involvement of members of the senior management team. Despite this commitment, the input into the social education lessons and the response of pupils are weaker here than elsewhere in the curriculum. The content and tasks frequently lack challenge.

57. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated by teachers into all lessons. Appropriate levels of contribution are made to their social development this way, with pupils joining in any discussions or group debate. A further contribution is made to their social development by the curricular provision in the Youth Award Scheme. Many pupils with special educational needs undertake personal research either on their own or in groups in this scheme, discuss and debate issues with a decision-making outcome, and make visits in the local area as a whole group. This helps to develop their social skills and focuses effectively on improving their communication skills.

58. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. In most subjects there are opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures. They develop an appreciation of the diversity and richness of art in the West and in other cultures. Religious education at Key Stage 3 introduces pupils to different religions and traditions around the world. Music has plans for, but does not currently provide, opportunities to learn across a wide range of musical traditions. The programme for assemblies celebrates important festivals such as Harvest, Remembrance, Diwali and Ramadan. These occasions make an important contribution but are not sufficient to prepare pupils for the ethnic and cultural diversity of the contemporary world. Nor are they sufficient to give pupils an appreciation of the cultural richness within their own local community.

59. Since the last inspection the school has maintained and developed its provision for pupils' moral and social development. The programme of social education has been restructured and strengthened. However, the weaknesses identified in the school's provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development remain. Religious education as a subject is still absent from the basic curriculum at Key Stage 4. Most assemblies, although the majority are well prepared and contribute to pupils' social and moral development, have no spiritual dimension and opportunities for pupils to reflect. The school's own audit of the curriculum identified opportunities for improvement but there has been no substantial change to policy or practice. Nor has the school found a way forward towards greater compliance with the spirit of the law on collective worship. Not enough is done to engage pupils with the cultural resources and traditions represented in the local community. There is no strategy for ensuring that these aspects of pupils' personal development are addressed and no policy by which to monitor and evaluate provision.

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

60. The school provides a secure environment for its pupils within its supportive community. Adults within the school act as good role models and are responsive to pupils' individual needs. Teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' progress, both academic and personal, and are effective in promoting discipline and good behaviour. Despite the difficulties of a split site, staff know pupils well. Support for pupils is good and the good pastoral care structure identified in the previous report continues to make a positive contribution. Staff fully involve pupils in target setting to improve learning and this is particularly effective in the sixth form where targets are linked to improving performance within specific subjects. Day-to-day assessment within lessons informs planning to address identified individual needs, and the computer-based integrated learning programme has a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment. The 'compulsory support' targeted at those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have fallen behind with GCSE coursework is specifically intended to improve their grades and these initiatives help to raise attainment across the curriculum. Pupils are able to approach staff for assistance if they encounter any problems. The good relationships in the school ensure that pupils are confident in approaching staff with any problems. The school employs a number of staff who provide support for pupils with special educational needs. These include a special needs support assistant, who has undergone some training in counselling, to whom staff can refer pupils or they can self-refer for personal, social or academic support.

61. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported with good levels of guidance and help. The support, counselling and guidance offered by the pupil support teacher are particularly effective, particularly in diffusing potentially difficult situations as well as offering pupils a further explanation of the causes of their problems. During lessons teachers generally provide support for pupils with special educational needs appropriately.

62. In the main, staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and pupils have a good understanding of the school's expectations. The policy includes a system of rewards and sanctions. The effectiveness of this policy ensures mostly good standards of behaviour in and around the school and during lessons, as well as good personal relationships. The school does not tolerate bullying or racism, and pupils are very confident that staff are usually aware of incidents and that any concerns brought to their attention

will be addressed. All such incidents are carefully recorded and the school involves parents and pupils in resolving these issues. It is widely understood that bullying will not be ignored. Exclusions are an integral part of the behaviour policy and are effective in maintaining an environment in which everyone has the right to learn in a cooperative atmosphere.

63. The school has good procedures for promoting attendance and punctuality, which fully involve parents. These have been effective in increasing levels of attendance since the previous inspection, although the procedures for monitoring attendance are barely satisfactory. Attendance is recorded accurately at the start of sessions and in lessons but because of the split site, the same tutor does not always register a tutor group's attendance every day and this affects their knowledge of specific circumstances influencing attendance. The heads of year monitor attendance but the use of symbols which do not differentiate between categories of authorised absence, combined with the failure to retain absence notes securely, lessens the effectiveness of the overall monitoring of attendance.

64. The school has adopted the local area child protection policy and this meets requirements. The headteacher, who last undertook training in child protection four years ago, is the designated teacher for child protection within the school. Staff are aware that he is the person to whom concerns should be reported. Staff are sensitive to the need to be vigilant and the heads of upper and lower school are to receive training in child protection prior to making them jointly responsible for child protection issues. Outside agencies, including the school nurse, the education welfare officer, social services, education, and special educational needs specialists provide effective support and advice for pupils. The school has an appropriate policy in respect of the use of force to control or restrain pupils and has established appropriate procedures to record any incidents.

65. Procedures for promoting health and safety are poor, although pupils are taught safe practice in practical lessons. The school has a health and safety policy which meets requirements and is supported by departmental policies. Equipment within the upper and lower sites is checked under maintenance agreements. There is no evidence of regular safety audits and risk assessments. Procedures within departments, such as science, are inadequate and risk assessments are not regularly included within lesson planning. Staff have not been trained in risk assessments. During the course of the inspection, a number of health and safety issues were identified and these were immediately addressed by the school. The sixth form centre is not the direct responsibility of the school but is covered by the host school's health and safety policy. In the centre, some electrical appliances have not been checked for several years, fire exits are not properly signed and a fire exit door was barred and locked, creating serious concerns for the well being of staff and pupils in the event of a fire. These issues were drawn to the attention of the school responsible for the buildings for urgent action.

66. Since the previous inspection, the school has tried, within the constraints of a site that serves three schools, to address the safety issues identified in relation to the proximity of traffic and pedestrians at the approaches to the school buildings, particularly at the lower school. However, despite the school's best endeavours, some cars still encroach onto the area designated for pedestrians rather than drive onto the grassed area adjacent to the road.

67. Four members of staff are fully qualified first aiders with current qualifications, and a number of other staff are trained in emergency first aid. As a consequence of the split site, and the hours of employment of the staff who administer first aid, there is not full cover at all times when pupils are on site, which is unsatisfactory. First aid supplies are adequate but are not always readily accessible. Accidents are properly recorded although, on occasions, the detail is insufficient to allow any identified issues to be resolved.

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

68. The school seeks to work closely with parents, who are regularly informed of their children's

progress and are fully involved when action is needed to improve performance or attitudes. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire generally expressed positive views about the school although a small minority did not feel that the school provides a clear understanding of what is taught. Parents feel welcome in the school and staff are readily accessible and helpful.

69. The information provided to parents is good and, at the start of the school year, they are sent various helpful booklets providing information such as a calendar of events for the year, a guide to good attendance and a guide to good behaviour, as well as a friendly newsletter. The school provides parents with clear reports that outline the curriculum covered and record pupils' progress and attainment, together with focused targets to assist their future progress. In addition, parents are invited to one consultation meeting each year. Parents are also invited to events and also to workshops on topics such as drugs awareness and boys' underachievement. These meetings are all generally well attended.

70. Following extensive consultation, home school contracts have recently been introduced, and the school is seeking to strengthen still further its links with parents. Parents are generally supportive of the work which pupils are expected to undertake at home. A small, but very hard working group, runs the Friends of Alderman White School and organises regular events which are supported by parents, staff and pupils. The money which they raise is used to fund items such as the refurbishment of a science prep room, making a contribution towards Internet provision for the school and to fund the postage for sending out a 'pack' of information to parents. The support and assistance provided by parents is appreciated by staff and pupils, and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and attainment within the school.

71. The school keeps parents of pupils with special educational needs appropriately informed over their child's progress and behaviour. Parents are invited to all statutory reviews and if they do not choose to attend, all are kept informed by letter. There are appropriate links with external support agencies, including good links with the neighbouring special school.

72. The school is successful in creating a community between its three sites through productions such as *Guys and Dolls*, which has already begun rehearsals and will involve pupils from all years within the cast and production/backstage team. Links with the wider community are mainly associated with the school's social education programme, although some, such as that with Nottingham Forest Football Club, provide valuable financial support. The school has good links, which benefit the transfer of pupils, with its main contributory schools and with the other two schools involved in the consortium that makes up the sixth form centre. The school works closely with the education authority, together with other specialists and support agencies and emergency services. They all contribute to the provision of support and advice to the school and pupils.

73. Pupils are involved in competitions and have been successful in winning prizes for themselves and for the school. They are also involved in decisions about fundraising activities to support local, national and international charities, and their understanding of the needs of others is raised through assemblies and within tutor groups. They provide harvest gifts for a local home for the elderly. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a good range of visits linked with aspects of the curriculum. These activities enrich the curriculum and provide effective opportunities for the pupils' personal and social development.

74. Links with business provide good support for the work experience programme, but there are few examples of them being used to enhance the curriculum. Currently, all pupils undertake work experience in Year 11. However, to minimise the impact upon work for examinations, in future, work experience will be undertaken by Year 10 pupils. To introduce this change, both Year 10 and Year 11 pupils will be undertaking work experience during this academic year. A small number of pupils are involved in identifying their own placements. These valuable learning opportunities provide an insight into the world of work, assist in the personal development of pupils, and play a positive part in supporting their attainment and progress.

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



## **Leadership and management**

75. As in the previous inspection, the school is well led and managed. The headteacher, who was appointed not long after the last inspection, provides strong but supportive leadership in the day-to-day management of the school and gives clear direction and focus to its longer-term development. In this work, he is ably supported by his recently reorganised senior management team, all of whom have a number of delegated responsibilities, including links with a small number of subject departments. Although a newly constituted group, they are working well together as a team in ensuring the smooth running of the school across the upper and lower school sites, and in contributing to the strategic oversight of the sixth form centre. Their links and regular meetings with middle managers enable them to support and monitor the work of departments across the school. Under the direction of the headteacher, they convey a sense of purpose and a clear commitment to improving educational standards and the quality of education within the school, and also to raising the profile of the school within the local community. In all these areas, they are making good progress and achieving some success. However, not all of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report have been addressed with the required degree of rigour and are raised again in this report, for example, pupils' spiritual development, religious education, collective worship and the level of resources in some subjects.

76. The governing body undertakes its role in the governance of the school effectively. Through its committee structure and procedures, governors maintain clear oversight of the work of the school, and in consultation with the headteacher take decisions about and determine the school's priorities and its longer-term direction. They are also extending their knowledge of and involvement in the work of the sixth form centre, a weakness identified in the last inspection report. Governors are very supportive and are committed to raising standards and the profile of the school. The governing body has approved a comprehensive range of policies and fulfils most of its legal responsibilities satisfactorily, although there are deficiencies in a number of areas. The school prospectus and the annual report to parents have some important omissions, which are in breach of the regulations. Although identified as weaknesses in the last inspection report, the school does not yet comply with the statutory requirements for religious education in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form or for a daily act of collective worship. There are no procedures for the appraisal of teachers or for the provision of information technology at Key Stage 4 for all pupils, and especially in science. The governing body is fully aware that it does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education, but as yet has no plans to change the current position.

77. Leadership by the heads of department and other middle managers is never less than satisfactory and in most instances it is good. Heads of year generally work effectively to support pupils in their year group, although the split-site nature of the school makes it more difficult for them to ensure a consistent approach in all tutor groups. Subject leaders, some of whom are relatively recent appointments, manage the work of their departments satisfactorily, and in the case of English, science, design and technology, geography, history, information technology, and religious education do so well. Not all subject leaders are held sufficiently to account for improving the performance of pupils within their subject areas.

78. The provision and support for pupils with special educational needs fully meets the requirements of the national Code of Practice. Management of the special educational needs department is good on both school sites and pupils with special educational needs benefit greatly as a result. Needs are recognised early, and ensuring provision to meet these needs is a priority within the school. The department constantly seeks ways of improving its provision.

79. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily throughout the school, although the school's policy in this area is old and no member of the senior staff is designated as having specific responsibility for equal opportunities. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, resources and out of school activities. However, in some lessons boys take up far more of the teacher's time and attention. In many subjects, with notable exceptions in science and geography, pupils tend to group themselves by gender.

Girls also tend to contribute less in many lessons, adopting a passive role. Such behaviour is rarely challenged. The school, under the leadership of the deputy headteacher, is actively addressing the needs of the higher attaining pupils.

80. The school has implemented a number of appropriate strategies for monitoring and evaluating aspects of the school's work, including classroom observation, regular meetings between senior staff and individual heads of department, the analysis of data and pupils' performance, in addition to reviewing rewards, attendance, homework and parental views. The governing body's strategic committee is also regularly involved in monitoring and reviewing areas of the school's work through reports from the headteacher, other governors' committees and through governors' visits to the school, although these are not extensive. These are all worthwhile activities, but their impact is somewhat reduced in some areas because the criteria used lack consistency and the outcomes of the monitoring are not evaluated critically or rigorously enough to inform and consequently improve aspects of the school's performance. Across the school, there is also some inconsistency in the way that heads of department undertake their monitoring roles, particularly in the frequency of classroom observation. This limits their ability to identify and address areas of inconsistency or weakness in their departments.

81. Strategic planning and shorter-term development planning are generally good. The current plan forms the basis of a good management tool and identifies a range of initiatives that are appropriate to the school's stage of development. The priorities in the plan form the basis of an effective strategy for improvement. Since the last inspection, when it was identified as a key issue, the format of the school development plan has improved, and the links between identified procedures and the use of resources have been clarified. The plan identifies a number of success criteria, but these are insufficiently quantified or specific enough to enable the school to monitor and evaluate its progress in meeting its targets. Departmental development planning is never less than satisfactory and in some instances, for example in design and technology, geography, history and religious education, it is good.

82. The school is generally successful in meeting most of its aims and they are reflected in the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils are valued as individuals and emphasis is placed on care, concern, and respect for others. The school is committed to helping pupils achieve their potential and the highest academic standards possible. Most parents indicate that they are supportive of the school's aims and values, and believe that the school enables pupils to achieve a good standard of work. Although the quality of teaching overall is good, the curriculum broad, but not always sufficiently challenging, the school has the potential to raise academic standards further, but this has not been realised as yet. The good ethos in the school and the positive relationships that exist between pupils and with the staff make it an effective place for pupils to learn and develop.

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

83. The school has sufficient, suitably qualified and experienced teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum, and contributes to the provision for sixth form students at the Lakeview Centre as one of the three consortium schools. New appointments are making a significant contribution to the school's continuing improvement. The gender balance overall is good, but women are not represented at head of year level. There is generally a good match between teachers' initial qualifications and the subjects they teach. In modern foreign languages and in history, pupils' progress has been hampered by frequent changes in staffing, but pupils are now benefiting from a period of stability.

84. Experienced staff and learning support assistants help the special needs coordinator in providing much effective in-class support to pupils on the national Code of Practice register. Currently there is insufficient support staff to cope with the demands in the lower school and the school is seeking to appoint a further full-time support assistant to help remedy this situation. The number of non-teaching staff is good but there are no foreign language assistants to support the teaching in modern languages. Technical support is insufficient in science and in design and technology, and is lacking in art, which constrains the

curriculum. The administrative and clerical staff are experienced and contribute effectively to the smooth running of the school.

85. Newly-qualified teachers and other new staff receive good support from senior members of staff and heads of department, and the staff handbook provides good guidance about the structures and procedures in the school. The mentoring system in place for students in initial teacher training is good.

86. Since the last inspection report, staff development planning and financial decision-making are now more closely linked to the school development plan. Although the appraisal procedures do not operate according to statutory requirements, the school has a system of classroom observations by line managers. The coordination of the staff development programme is efficient, and procedures for monitoring and evaluating in-service training are effective. There are staff development needs in the approach to assessment in science, art and physical education.

87. Accommodation within the school, which is based on three sites, each of a different character, is generally unsatisfactory for the delivery of the National Curriculum. The split site involves staff in movement between sites, which is demanding, and it necessitates the duplication of some facilities, such as libraries and equipment. There are plans to locate Years 7 to 11 on the upper school site from September 2001. As identified in the last inspection report, there is still pressure on laboratory space and a high proportion of science lessons each week have to be taught in classrooms. Some laboratories lack sufficient utilities, with the additional problem that some sinks are blocked and on occasions there are insufficient stools for the number of pupils. Some of the science laboratories are too small for the size of classes. These factors, combined, have a detrimental impact on teaching and learning in science. The computer suites on both the upper and lower sites are cramped. There are no individual practice rooms for music, which limits the music curriculum. The 'sports hall' on the upper site, which is located within a listed Dutch Barn, provides poor accommodation. The open plan layout of the sixth form centre provides airy and welcoming accommodation and a good environment for students to learn.

88. Classrooms vary in size. Some are cramped for the number of pupils and are, on occasions, dangerously cluttered with pupils' rucksacks and bags left in the gangways between tables. A library on each site, offering access to computers, provides a good focus for research and independent learning. Displays are used effectively, throughout the sites, to celebrate pupils' work and to relate to areas of the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from specialist rooms on both sites. When withdrawn for more focused activities, pupils have security and quietness when they work, and their progress is good as a result.

89. The buildings are well managed and standards of caretaking are good. There is no evidence of vandalism and very little graffiti, which is mainly confined to furniture. The grounds are maintained to a satisfactory standard. The upper site includes good hard and grassed play surfaces, although the lower site offers only hard play space of a satisfactory standard. This lack of provision of a grassed area means that pupils in the lower school have to travel to the upper site for some physical education activities. The school benefits from a number of smaller rooms, which facilitate the provision of designated medical rooms and other areas that are used for specialist support and interviews.

90. The upper and lower sites are on a single level but do not have the benefit of access for those with disabilities. The sixth form centre is built on several split levels and whilst it has no disabled access or facilities, last year the centre was able to make arrangements to accommodate a student with physical disabilities.

91. The adequacy of resources, including books, materials and equipment, for the effective delivery of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Resource centres in the lower and upper schools, enhanced by appropriate displays, provide practical and well cared for accommodation. Both of these centres contain a suitable range of fiction and non-fiction books that have been improved in quality and quantity since the

last inspection. Additionally, they are equipped with a range of networked computers, including multi-media, appropriate software for the subjects of the curriculum and videos that pupils have access to, to enhance their studies. The resource centres are also connected to the Internet, to which pupils have supervised access. These resource centres remain open after school, providing additional worthwhile time for pupils. Again this is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs on both sites are enabled to make good progress through the technology provision. Pupils are withdrawn for short sessions to use an integrated learning computer program that builds up their vocabulary, improves their spelling and helps to improve their reading comprehension. The provision for information technology overall, and especially in supporting the work in subject departments is unsatisfactory. The ratio of pupils to computers at 10 to 1 is higher than the current national average of 7 to 1.

92. When pupils are studying particular topics in depth, stocks of books are supplemented by loans from the Education Library Service. Books are usefully shared between sites, when certain themes such as the Victorians or the American Indians are being studied. Resources stored in individual curriculum areas are generally satisfactory in quality and quantity to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. However in science, the overall level of some of the larger items of equipment is unsatisfactory. The provision for data logging is also unsatisfactory. These deficiencies were referred to in the last inspection. In music in the lower school, there is no stereo system or CD-player and this is having an adverse effect on pupils' attainment in listening. Whilst there are sufficient keyboards, these have trailing wires around the room. Percussion instruments in the music department are in need of repair.

### **The efficiency of the school**

93. The school has effective budgeting arrangements to support educational developments, based on whole school and departmental development planning. The school has improved the link between its priorities and the allocation of resources, a key issue identified in the last inspection report. The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear understanding of their longer-term objectives. The governors contribute to the planning process by maintaining a strategic overview and bringing to discussions a range of relevant experience and expertise. Development planning is effective at school and departmental levels, although the outcomes often lack specific, measurable success criteria. The school development plan informs medium term planning over a three-year period and budget setting. Priorities are identified and correspond with the school's current needs. There is a close association between educational and financial planning, although the resources required for specific proposals are not always sufficiently detailed. Priorities are closely related to raising standards in the school.

94. Systems of financial control are of a high order. There is an appropriate degree of liaison between the headteacher, senior management team, heads of department, the bursar, the chair of the governors' finance and general purposes committee and the governing body. Financial procedures and controls are comprehensive and they are operated with a high degree of efficiency. The most recent auditor's report was produced in October 1998 and the school has already implemented all of the recommendations with the exception of that requiring signature lines to be printed on order forms. This has not been possible because it is not a feature of the widely applied commercial software which the school uses. Detailed financial management information is readily accessible and provided in a helpful format for the headteacher, senior management team and heads of department on a regular basis. Regular reports are also provided for governors and the recently appointed chair of the finance and general purposes committee has already made some useful suggestions to ensure that governors have a greater opportunity to review financial information provided to them.

95. The funding allocated for pupils with special educational needs is used effectively to provide appropriate resources, teaching and non-teaching support. The school values all staff and is working towards Investor in People status. The money, which the school receives through the Standards Fund, is linked to the school's needs and used appropriately for the professional development of staff.

96. The headteacher, senior management team and the bursar form a finance committee which closely monitors expenditure. Annual allocations are devolved to departments using a formula based on the number of pupils, the number of periods taught and a 'weighted' factor which favours practical subjects. These funds are sufficient to enable departments to operate effectively and the formula used for the allocation of finance to curriculum areas is perceived by staff to be fair. In addition to this allocation, a figure from the budget is reserved for discretionary allocation against specific bids. In the current year, the total sum available for discretionary allocation is £10,000 and this is being used appropriately. Throughout the school, resources and supplies are satisfactory overall and the funding for departments is supporting teaching and learning.

97. As a consequence of the split site, the school incurs additional costs in staffing and duplicating some facilities, equipment and services. It receives an additional sum within its budget allocation to offset some of these costs and makes effective use of its staffing, accommodation and other resources.

98. The school uses its available resources to support pupils' learning, and expenditure is appropriately targeted on meeting educational needs. Day-to-day administration is unobtrusive but efficient. Overall, in terms of its level of expenditure and the quality of education provided and educational standards achieved, the school provides satisfactory value for money

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

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

#### **English**

99. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was below the national average whereas the proportion of those reaching Level 6 or above was close to the average. The performance of both boys and girls was below their respective national averages. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the average level score was well above the average. The unconfirmed results in the tests in 1999 at Level 5 or above were well below those of the previous year. The work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national expectation, broadly similar to the 1998 test results.

100. In the GCSE examinations in 1998 for English language, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was below the national average. The performance of girls was comparatively worse than that of boys. The results for English literature, from a restricted entry, were close to the national average. In 1999, the results were well below those of 1998, especially in English language. Pupils' attainment, from the work seen during the inspection, is below that which is found nationally, reflecting the examination results in 1998.

101. In the A-level examinations in 1998 in English literature, the results were above the average, with all students gaining grades A-E, and more than half gaining the highest grades of A and B. This level of performance has been sustained in the 1999 examinations. Students' attainment in the sixth form exceeds course requirements.

102. The overall standard of speaking and listening throughout the school is in line with the national expectation. The great majority of pupils listen attentively, although a few, especially in Year 7, settle slowly and lose concentration quickly. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils answer clearly and fluently. A minority of lower-attaining pupils, however, fail to make themselves heard. When given the opportunity, pupils speak at length, and pupils in Year 8 gave clear and coherent instructions for a short local walk. Almost all pupils read aloud confidently and with meaning. During role-play in drama, pupils in Year 11 spoke articulately and improvised lively dialogue. In other subjects, most pupils listen attentively. In art, design and technology, history and modern foreign languages pupils are encouraged to use talk as part of their learning. When given such opportunity, pupils speak with confidence, work well together in groups and use such techniques as role-play effectively.

103. The general standard of reading is in line with the national expectation. All lessons begin with a period of silent, individual reading and this practice is improving both the quality and breadth of pupils' reading comprehension. Pupils now keep thorough records of their reading, which answers reservations raised in the last inspection report. Throughout the school, pupils study in detail a wide range of literary and non-literary material. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils identify and discuss aspects such as character, plot and themes in plays and novels. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 show perceptive understanding of Dickens' skill in creating tension and mystery in a short story. In their reading of *Macbeth*, pupils in Year 10 demonstrate a firm grasp of the significance of the supernatural in the play. Students in the sixth form read widely and bring maturity and sensitivity to their study of a range of great literature. In other subjects, the majority of pupils read well enough to enable them to understand textbooks and other materials. In history, pupils read extensively and are skilled at extracting information from texts. In the examination course in physical education, pupils read widely for information. In design and technology, there are many opportunities for pupils to research for information. Elsewhere, in other curriculum areas, reading in a structured way is not used to extend knowledge and understanding.

104. Pupils' attainment in writing is below that which is found nationally and is a significant factor in the below average performance in the subject. The written work of a significant minority in Year 7 includes many mistakes in sentence structure, expression of ideas, spelling and punctuation. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils draft their writing effectively but a significant number still do not use the process properly. Higher-attaining pupils present their work carefully with neat handwriting, but a significant number of average and lower attaining pupils do not take sufficient care. The handwriting of boys and the general presentation of their work are more untidy than those of girls. At the end of Year 7 some classes write entertaining and attractive booklets for younger children. Much written work in other subjects is careless and untidy. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher-attaining pupils generally produce some good, extended assignments in geography, history, physical education and modern foreign languages. Note taking and drafting are strong in geography.

105. Most pupils make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. In the sixth form students make good progress. Overall levels of literacy on entry are below average and, with results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 well above those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, there is evidence of steady gains in language skills. Results in the GCSE examinations suggest that pupils' attainment is maintained throughout Key Stage 4, although in 1999 the results were untypically low in English language. By the end of Key Stage 3, there are clear gains in the effectiveness of group work. Regular, silent reading is noticeably widening the range of reading. Some lower-attaining pupils make slow progress, especially with their writing. Those with special educational needs make only steady progress, through lack of sufficient support in the classes where, sometimes, over half of the pupils have individual educational programmes. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils make marked progress in the maturity of their critical appreciation of literature. In the sixth form, students rapidly broaden and intensify their knowledge of literary texts, their history and background, for example, in their first encounter with Chaucer's poetry.

106. The great majority of pupils throughout the school are well motivated and eager to learn. Relationships within the classroom are, in the main, positive and constructive. Pupils generally listen carefully and work together effectively in groups. In Year 7, a few pupils are not well motivated and are easily distracted. A small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11, usually, but not always, boys, become quickly disengaged from their work and chatter constantly. This adversely affects the progress of others as well as themselves. Students in the sixth form show high standards of commitment and maturity.

107. The quality of teaching throughout the school is always at least satisfactory and, in over three-quarters of lessons, it is good and, sometimes, very good. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good, with high academic standards evident in the sixth form. Lessons are carefully planned and prepared, and the content of lessons is well matched to pupils' level of attainment. In the best lessons, work is clearly placed in context, tasks and expectations are understood, targets are challenging but achievable, the pace is good and there is a variety of teaching approaches. When teaching is less effective, there is some lack of urgency, pupils are not constrained to listen attentively and the range of activities is limited. Marking is done conscientiously and, in contrast to the findings of the last report, it is constructive and positive.

108. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides equality of opportunity to all pupils. In Years 7 and 8 drama is taught in English lessons. From Year 9 it forms part of the optional examination course in expressive arts. Apart from those taking this course, the great majority of pupils do not benefit from regular experience of drama after the end of Year 8. There is much successful activity in drama outside the curriculum, with regular, ambitious productions staged by the expressive arts team. The use of information technology, as part of lessons, is minimal and provision within the department is inadequate. Departmental documentation is helpful and thorough. The ethos is positive and matches closely that of the school. The department is well managed, with great skill and enthusiasm.

## **Mathematics**

109. The results of the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 were below the national averages for the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above. The average level score, when compared with similar schools, was well above the national average. The performance of boys exceeded that of girls in the three years from 1996 to 1998, but the girls outperformed the boys at Level 5 or above in 1999. Again, taking the three years from 1996 to 1998, pupils' attainment in the national tests was below the national average, lagging behind the national average by nearly 6 months in their competency in mathematics. The results of the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were better than those in 1998 for pupils attaining Level 5 or above and also for Level 6 or above. In the GCSE examinations in 1998, the results at grades A\*-C were just below the national average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the results were lower than those in 1998. In the A-level examinations in 1998, the results were below the national average for pupils gaining grades A-E and also for the proportion obtaining the higher grades of A and B. However, these results are based on a very small cohort of students. The A-level results in 1999 were better than in 1998 in the proportion of pupils gaining grades A-E and obtaining grades A and B.

110. From the lessons observed, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils, pupils' attainment is in line with the standards expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 3 and below the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 4. Students' attainment in the sixth form is in line with course requirements. Many pupils' attainment in number and using and applying mathematics in Key Stages 3 and 4 is below the standard expected for pupils of this age. In both key stages, many pupils have an unsatisfactory knowledge of their multiplication tables and there is no coherent approach to building up key mathematical vocabulary throughout the school. Pupils in Key Stage 3 satisfactorily use a variety of ways to add and subtract whole numbers. In Key Stage 4, the higher attaining pupils manipulate indices appropriately and successfully calculate value for money of different sized pizzas, using their knowledge of scale factors in enlargements. Whilst there are strengths in some of the work on number undertaken in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 since the last inspection, the weaknesses outlined above remain. In the sixth form, students' attainment in manipulating trigonometric equations is in line with expectations. The mathematics department has improved since the last inspection, although insufficient emphasis has been placed on helping pupils gain greater familiarity with technical terms or in improving the layout of their written work.

111. Pupils' progress in mathematics is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress. Factors aiding their progress include the attitudes of most of the pupils and the overall satisfactory standard of teaching. Factors inhibiting progress are the lack of high expectations by teachers of some lower attaining sets, particularly in Key Stage 4, the slow pace of some lessons and pupils not knowing their multiplication tables well enough. The content of the work in some lessons is too easy. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress in mathematics. The higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are generally making satisfactory progress although pupils in the top sets in Key Stage 4 could be stretched further with more challenging questions.

112. Pupils' response in lessons is satisfactory overall in both key stages and is good in the sixth form. Their attitudes to mathematics are variable and they generally mirror the enthusiasm of the teacher. In some lessons where the pace is slow and the work is too easy, pupils waste time and misbehave. Relationships overall in the mathematics department between pupils and with their teachers are satisfactory and are good in the sixth form.

113. At both key stages, most of the teaching is satisfactory, sometimes good and occasionally very good, although there are a few instances of unsatisfactory teaching. The best lessons have a brisk pace, thoroughly assess what pupils know, understand and do, set high expectations and meter out time in small portions so that pupils stay on task. In these lessons, teachers indicate the length of time pupils have to complete their work, which ensures they remain focused. In such lessons, a rigorous way of teaching the topic leaves pupils in no doubt as to the method to follow. In the less successful lessons, the pace is slow, and expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are too low. In all the lessons observed, teachers'



subject knowledge and understanding are satisfactory, as is their planning. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent, with few diagnostic comments and points made to stretch those pupils who have obtained full marks. Homework is usually appropriate to back up work carried out in class but its setting is inconsistent.

114. Resources for mathematics are satisfactory and they are used appropriately to support class work and pupils' learning. The scheme of work covers the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils are set in mathematics according to their prior attainment in Year 8. Whilst setting is having an overall positive effect on raising standards, there is a tendency for some sets to be treated as 'low ability' sets from too early an age rather than leaving this labelling until a much later stage. In mathematics this can cause particular difficulties as pupils entered for the lowest tier at GCSE can only achieve a maximum of grade D however well they perform. This can affect their progress if carried out too soon, as pupils become dispirited. The head of mathematics monitors aspects of the work of the department including the observation of lessons.

## Science

115. The results of the 1998 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were below the national average at Level 5 or above and close to the average at Level 6 or above. Over the last three years there has been a deterioration in the school's results. When compared with similar schools, the average level score was well above average. The unconfirmed results for 1999 are broadly similar to the 1998 results at both Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above. In the GCSE examinations in 1998, the results were below the national average for grades A\*-C with only one pupil gaining the highest grade. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE results in the last three years and the results in 1999 are better than those for 1998. In the A-level examinations in 1998, the small number of students entered makes national comparisons inappropriate. However, nearly every student obtained a grade A-E.

116. From the work seen during the inspection, pupils are achieving higher standards than the results of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 and 1999 would indicate. Pupils' attainment by the end of the key stage is in line with the national expectation, indicating a different potential pattern in the future. Most lower attaining pupils, including those with special education needs, are achieving satisfactory and often good standards, but there is a small, but significant, number who are failing to achieve their full potential in the tests. Pupils' literacy skills are generally well supported by the department with most pupils having confidence in using scientific terminology. The standard of presentation of written work, however, is generally below average, with most pupils keeping records of work that are neither clear nor set out effectively for later revision. Numeracy skills are good. Information technology skills are less well developed, because of the lack of opportunity to use computers as an important tool in science. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with expectations overall, again higher than the 1998 results would suggest. Most lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs continue to achieve standards that are at least in line with or better than might be expected of them. A small but significant number of higher attaining pupils are achieving less than might be expected because they receive too few opportunities to think critically and carry out extended independent research. Pupils attain equally well across the attainment targets of experimental and investigative science, life and living processes and physical processes. Attainment is weaker in the areas dealing with materials and their properties.

117. Pupils' progress in science lessons is good at Key Stage 3. They make good gains in knowledge and understanding and in communicating scientific observations. By the end of Year 9, they understand the structure and function of teeth and can describe, with reasons, the differences between their own teeth and those of a sheep and a dog. Girls and boys have a good knowledge of the nature of electricity and use symbols to draw and explain about series circuits. Their knowledge of the three states of matter is secure and they understand about the nature of diffusion and how temperature affects the rate of diffusion in liquids. Since the previous inspection there has been a significant improvement in the development of

pupils' investigative skills, but there are still too few opportunities for them to make their own predictions, define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding, or to plan their investigations. Pupils have the skills to conduct experiments planned by the teacher or themselves, are able to record observations and take measurements, and present data in the form of charts and graphs, reaching at least average levels of attainment. The criteria used in assessing pupils' investigations are shared with the pupils and realistic targets are set to help them reach higher levels.

118. During Key Stage 4, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, although there are small but significant numbers of higher attaining pupils and lower attaining pupils who are not always being sufficiently challenged. Pupils use and extend the knowledge and understanding developed at Key Stage 3.

By the end of the key stage, pupils communicate confidently about the structure and function of the heart and of the principle of the double circulatory system. They understand the structure of the atom and that elements are arranged in the periodic table according to their relative atomic mass to give a pattern in properties. They know for example where magnesium fits in the reactivity series and which metals are more reactive than others. Practical skills have improved since the last inspection and pupils are able to draw conclusions that are consistent with the evidence gained, and explain these in terms of their scientific knowledge and understanding. Investigative skills, such as making predictions based on scientific knowledge and understanding, and their evaluation of their work, are less well developed. The majority of pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages because most of their teachers have high but realistic expectations, provide carefully selected materials, and adapt resources to meet their needs. They also benefit from the smaller group size that most are in.

119. The response of pupils to the teaching is generally good, but a few classes particularly in Key Stage 4 are inattentive, chatty and easily distracted. In Key Stage 3, pupils are well behaved, well motivated and concentrate well. They are enthusiastic experimenters, willing to try out new ideas and techniques, and keen to answer questions. They have good relationships with their teachers and with one another, and collaborate well in their practical groups. In Key Stage 4, the enthusiasm that supports progress in the earlier years is less evident than the determination to gain creditable results. They are good listeners, but their responses lack fluency and they show little initiative in raising scientific questions or ideas. Sixth form students contribute willingly in lessons, and the level of mutual respect is evident in the open way they interact with one another and the staff.

120. The quality of teaching is mostly good overall at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and is generally satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Some of the teaching at times is very good, but there are examples of unsatisfactory and occasionally poor teaching. Teachers are committed to their work and operate well together as a team. They have good subject knowledge and understanding and are confident in the material they are required to teach. Whilst expectations are generally high, small numbers of pupils at both the upper and lower end of the ability range are not always fully challenged. Most lessons are well planned but not all teachers make the learning objectives explicit to the class. Teachers generally use a good range of approaches to interest and stimulate pupils and most vary activities well. Where appropriate, teachers start lessons with a review of work undertaken previously, and they work hard to help pupils overcome problems. Teachers manage their pupils well, maintaining firm but friendly discipline. In the most effective lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace by setting time limits for different activities. They make appropriate use of resources to stimulate pupils' interest, and help their understanding. For example, the use of an overhead projector and a card game in a Year 11 lesson was successful in helping lower attaining pupils learn about variation in human beings and whether particular characteristics are the result of the genes they inherit, the environment they live in or a combination of both. Homework is set regularly and complements work set in lessons.

121. Assessment, which is mainly by end of topic tests, marked work and other assessment procedures, is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. The marking of books is inconsistent, often lacks rigour and is not always in accordance with the school policy. Comments are usually encouraging but do not always show pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Assessment at the end of topics is

thorough and well planned, and analysis has begun to take place to identify areas where the curriculum and/or the teaching can be modified to improve results. A new computerised assessment and recording system is in place and data from it is used to place pupils in teaching groups. Assessment of experimental and investigative science is good. Schemes of work have also improved since the last inspection. Curriculum planning is generally good, although it does not fully comply with the requirement to include information and communications technology capability within science. For example, pupils do not gain experience of data logging at either key stage.

122. The department is well led and staff have united in a professional way under his leadership. A good team ethos prevails, with an enthusiastic commitment to the pupils' learning, which are major factors in the level of progress currently being made by pupils. The management of routine organisation is good, but insufficient emphasis is given to monitoring and evaluation strategies that will lead to further improvements in standards. The level of technician provision has not improved since the previous inspection and remains low. However, the technical staff provide good support to the teaching of science. The storage of chemicals is unsatisfactory. In particular, radioactive substances require removal to a more secure location. The provision of science equipment is inadequate. Some expensive items of equipment have not been maintained through lack of funds, whilst others are beyond repair. Equipment such as ammeters, lab-packs, water baths and electronic balances are urgently needed. There are also shortages in resources for information technology and a lack of textbooks at both key stages, which restricts the progress of pupils. The science accommodation remains unsatisfactory overall. Currently, between a quarter and a third of lessons take place in classrooms and consequently the range of practical activities that can be attempted by these classes is limited. There has been some refurbishment of a preparation room since the last inspection, but in terms of space and utilities there has been no improvement to the laboratory accommodation since the last inspection report.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Art**

123. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 was below the national figure. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations in 1998 was well below the national average and remained about the same in 1999. In both years, the performance of the girls was considerably better than that of the boys. The small number of students entered for the A-level examinations in both 1998 and 1999 makes comparison with the national data inappropriate. However, in 1998 all students gained grades A-E, although none achieved the highest grades of A or B. In 1999, all students gained grades A-E with a half gaining the higher grades. The A-level results fluctuate considerably from year-to-year, depending on the consortia arrangements at the sixth form centre.

124. Pupils' attainment in art by the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national expectation, but slightly better than the teachers' own assessments would indicate. From the work seen during the inspection, it is evident that teachers' assessments are not sufficiently accurate, particularly in their judgements about pupils' art capability, which, although judged to be below the national average, is not as far below as the teachers' own assessments would imply. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is also below the standard expected nationally. In the sixth form, students' attainment is more variable. From the evidence of their work, some students produce work that has the potential to gain a good A-level pass whilst others are inappropriately entered for A-level and may be better suited to a vocational GNVQ course in art and design. Throughout the school pupils have a better ability in, and a liking for, the production of art. They are far less interested in the aesthetic, academic and cognitive aspects of art and these are under-represented in their work at all levels, thus limiting their eventual attainment. At all levels, the higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently, through either extension tasks or the expectation that they should develop higher order learning and research skills.

125. Pupils are generally making good progress at Key Stage 3 in art making but their progress is

barely satisfactory in their knowledge and understanding of the work of artists and the social and cultural functions of art. At Key Stage 4, pupils are also making satisfactory progress in art making but insufficient emphasis is placed on improving the quality and standard of work and it being influenced by comparison with the work of other artists. At both key stages, the progress they make in developing their art skills is a strength and directly reflects the good teaching they receive. This is especially evident at Key Stage 3 where many pupils begin with a limited capability in and knowledge of art. Students are generally making satisfactory progress in the sixth form. Pupils with special educational needs are also making satisfactory progress in art.

126. Pupils are generally interested in art and are usually well behaved and thoughtful in lessons. They are far more interested in using art materials and in art production than they are in the academic study of art. There is a marked variation between the attitudes of boys and girls. Girls are better motivated and show greater perseverance with their art, and consequently their progress and attainment is greater. Boys are less interested, more often absent, make slower progress and eventually achieve less creditable grades.

Boys underachieve in art, more than is generally found elsewhere. There are some indicators that the attitudes of boys to the study of art is different to that of girls and is more reminiscent of a hidden code, which suggests that they do not like to be seen to be good at art or to be keen to study. The majority of pupils need systematic guidance. Few have the confidence or ability to develop their art in their own way. Very little individual experimentation is undertaken and little risk taking that would help the discovery of personal visual expression.

127. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is mostly good and never less than satisfactory. It tends, however, to be rather prescriptive and based upon a good but rigid scheme of work. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, although there is a tendency for teachers to substitute the examination board syllabus for a scheme of work and to avoid the need for detailed lesson planning, with clearly identified learning outcomes. Lessons are usually well managed with appropriate resources but often the timing of inputs by the teacher is not considered sufficiently well. Over-long teacher introductions often result in a waning in pupils' levels of concentration. Teachers tend to use a narrow range of teaching approaches and too many lessons follow the pattern of a long introduction by the teacher, followed by practical activity by the pupils.

128. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum although it is insufficiently balanced. Both two-dimensional work and three-dimensional work are undertaken. Investigating and art making is by far the most significant element. Knowledge and understanding of art is the weaker element and is under-represented in the curriculum. Pupils have access to art clubs at lunch times and after school. Field visits, visits to galleries and studies of the local environment are occasionally undertaken to good effect. These opportunities provide good enrichment to the teaching and to the curriculum. The inclusion of computer work in the art curriculum is poor at present. The provision for special educational needs pupils is satisfactory. Teachers are aware of pupils' individual education plans, although no specialist in-class support is provided. Systems for the assessment of pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, although developed, are inaccurate in practice. The lack of assessment trials and the standardisation of pupils' portfolios of work are a weakness.

129. The department is satisfactorily managed. The head of department has a good working relationship with the second teacher in the department and a good system of cooperation and sharing exists. However, they have insufficient access to a wider forum of discussion, consultation or advice. The monitoring of the curriculum is discussed and shared each year. The monitoring of teaching, where good practices can be shared and pupils' learning enhanced through better teaching, is not happening at present but is planned for this year. The department makes effective and efficient use of the resources it has available.

## **Design and technology**

130. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 and in 1999 indicate that the majority of pupils achieve Level 5 or above, the standard expected for their age. The girls' performance is better than that of the boys'. The GCSE results in 1998 for grades A\*-C in the different subject related courses were above the national average. In 1999, the results were slightly, but not significantly, lower than those for 1998. The girls' performance in 1999 for grades A\*-C was better than that of the boys', reversing the position in 1998. Over the past two years, the pass rate has been better than the pass rate for most other subjects in the school. The A-level results in 1998 in design and technology were slightly below the national average although the small number of students taking the examination makes realistic comparisons very difficult. The results in 1999, again for a small number of students, showed a slight improvement. The proportion of students attaining the higher grades of A or B has been below average in recent years.

131. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is at the standard expected nationally. The department ensures that pupils thoroughly understand how to achieve good standards at each stage in their design projects to produce finished products of good quality. Pupils use a wide variety of sources of information to develop imaginative ideas for their designs and their cultural awareness, as seen for example, in a Year 9 lesson on a Native Americans project. Standards of graphical skills are generally above average and pupils make carefully annotated sketches and drawings to explain how their design ideas have changed and improved. Pupils have an understanding of the working characteristics of a range of materials. They know how to use tools and equipment safely and accurately. The quality of their finished products shows careful attention to detail. When designing a decorated box or carrier of their choice, pupils select suitable materials and use construction processes confidently and with reasonable accuracy. In food technology, pupils have an understanding of what constitutes a healthy balanced diet and are able to explore industrial practices to develop their products. Resources limit pupils' depth of experience in computer-aided design and control, although they improve the presentation of projects using desktop publishing.

132. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations and broadly reflects the results of the GCSE examinations in 1998 and 1999. Current work with resistant materials, graphics, textiles and food technology is average and some is better. Pupils know exactly how their work is assessed and monitor their standards at each stage using a detailed check and mark list. In their design work, pupils specialise either in resistant materials, food technology or textiles. They have a sound knowledge and grasp of construction techniques although little experience of control technology and computer-aided design. The presentation of work is good and higher attaining pupils produce confident design ideas with detailed explanations. Design work in the sixth form is of the expected standard to meet course requirements, although the sample seen was too small to make a valid comparison against national expectations.

133. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Pupils enter Year 7 with levels of attainment that are below average overall, and by the end of Year 9 the majority achieve the standard expected for their age. Pupils make good progress in developing their designing and construction skills, and in learning the underlying theory, on tasks that are well matched to their levels of attainment, with clear learning objectives for each lesson. Pupils work on their own and in groups to develop confidence and independence. The department ensures good standards of research, practical skills and presentation of work. By the end of Year 9, all pupils have experienced a range of activities in graphics, resistant materials, electronics, food technology and textiles. They have examined cultural influences in designing and explored industrial practices and product development. During Key Stage 4, pupils consolidate their learning satisfactorily and build on their skills of practical competence to solve more complex problems of design, and to extend their knowledge of product development in food. Pupils know how their work is assessed and what they need to do to improve their standards. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, especially when extra support is provided in lessons.

134. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons, and are polite, cooperative and willing to learn. They concentrate well to work to their best standards. They are prepared to revise work to make improvements and show pride in their achievements. They work well collaboratively in small groups or on their own and use equipment responsibly. Some pupils lack confidence and show immature attitudes to work, and are unable to work effectively without extra support.

135. The teaching is good throughout the school and occasionally very good. Teachers know their subjects well and plan thoroughly to ensure that the standards expected are consistently high in all aspects. Teaching is well structured and linked to requirements at both key stages. The most effective lessons have clear, short-term objectives, and the careful match of work to pupils' different levels of attainment and interests contributes to a suitable pace. Pupils are encouraged to apply their knowledge of English, mathematics, science and art appropriately in their work. Assessment is particularly well developed and is used effectively to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve at each stage of their work. Support materials are produced to a good standard and allow pupils to take responsibility in their learning. Homework is used effectively to reinforce the content of lessons. The lack of adequate resources limits teaching in computer-aided design and control.

136. The department has generally maintained the standards identified in the last report. Leadership and management of the department are good but both subject coordinators now have additional responsibilities that compete for their time. Improvements include a greater cultural perspective in designing, and risk assessments are explicit in all work. Resources restrict progress in computer-aided design and manufacture, and there are no alternative vocational courses at Key Stage 4. Accommodation is good in the lower school, but is cramped and dispersed on the upper school site. Rooms have inadequate storage, especially in resistant materials. Technical support is insufficient, particularly in the lower school site for food technology.

## **Geography**

137. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 were close to the national figures for geography. The proportion of pupils assessed at the higher Level 7 was well above the national average. The GCSE results at grades A\*-C in 1998 were well below the national average. These figures represent a significant decline on the previous year. When the 1998 cohort of pupils was in Year 9, the subject suffered from having been taught by temporary teachers, causing a great reduction in the numbers opting to follow the GCSE course in the subject. In 1999, the GCSE results have shown a marked improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C, and were better than the results in most other subjects. Over time, the results, when averaged out, have been rising steadily and at a greater rate than that found nationally. In the sixth form, geography is not taught by any of the school staff, and there are no students following a course in geography in Year 13. The only student entered for the A-level examination in 1998 gained a grade A-E. In 1999, all but one of the five students gained grades A-E. Making realistic comparisons with national figures are difficult because of the low numbers taking the examinations.

138. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectation, confirming the teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils have an appropriate sense of both scale and direction. They understand the significance of compass points on maps and they understand why scale is important. Pupils describe simple journeys using appropriate terminology and by referring to principal geographical features from reading maps or from memory. Their knowledge and understanding of physical geography is generally good and most pupils can explain cause and effect to an appropriately high standard, for example, when linking volcanic activity to human geography. Higher attaining pupils have a firm grasp of technical language, for example employing the term 'Tsunami' for a tidal wave in a Year 9 lesson. Pupils also link cause and effect well when comparing natural disasters to the environment. By focusing on solutions to these problems, appropriate awareness of citizenship issues is raised, especially the concept of social responsibility.

139. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the standard expected nationally, and is better than the results in recent GCSE examinations would indicate. The improvements are due to better use of assessment and the recent introduction of improved teaching techniques. The outcome of these has not yet been reflected fully in the GCSE examinations. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the physical features of Brazil, and are able to construct, analyse and interpret choropleth and dot maps effectively. Pupils use information technology well to support their work. In Year 11, pupils have a sound understanding of physical geography when looking at cause and effect in relation to flooding on the river Mississippi, including the use of a hydrograph to help interpret water run off levels. Their analytical skills are good.

140. Pupils' progress is good at Key Stage 3, both in lessons and over time. Their skills in interpreting maps develop well, with good knowledge of symbols and their use being known by the majority by the end of the key stage. Pupils develop a good sense of scale and direction. They learn a wide range of technical language and learn to apply this correctly in lessons on environmental issues and tectonic activity. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in relating cause and effect when examining the causes of disasters and the effects on human geography. The progress of lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good overall. There are improvements in the style of writing, the way work is presented and in the knowledge of basic facts. Their progress is less secure in linking cause and effect, and interpreting graphs.

141. Pupils in Key Stage 4 make good progress in lessons. A scrutiny of their work shows progress to be satisfactory over time. In lessons, pupils build well on prior learning, extending their skills of graph work well through the use of information technology, and through group analysis and debate. Pupils learn to prioritise well when discussing the possible success of strategies for containing the flooding of the Mississippi. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in learning about the causes of flooding and proposed solutions. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress overall, although concepts are not always clearly understood and explanations when comparing graphs and interpreting them are often superficial. Much of the improvements in progress in lessons are due to recently introduced target setting and the continual use being made of assessment in lessons as an instrument for raising standards.

142. Pupils' response in lessons is good at both key stages. Most pupils enjoy geography and have positive attitudes to work. The majority take pride and care when presenting their work. At Key Stage 3, in some lessons, pupils occasionally arrive in a restless frame of mind, but with effective teaching strategies, they settle down quickly and generally work well. Pupils with special educational needs, who currently receive no additional support, are generally well behaved and work towards the negotiated targets set within the lessons.

143. The quality of teaching overall is good and a strength of the subject. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding which they use well when questioning pupils or giving instructions, as, for example, in Year 7 lessons on compass roses or in Year 10 when analysing statistics and graphs. Planning is good at both key stages. Clear aims and learning objectives are communicated to pupils at the outset or written on the board. In the most effective lessons, these are reviewed at the end of the lesson and targets for improvement are set. At both key stages, while challenges are generally high, the work is insufficiently matched to the learning needs of the very high attaining and the very low attaining pupils. Sometimes, teachers' time is disproportionately used up by a relatively small number of pupils needing additional support and specific guidance. Good teaching incorporates strong moves to independent learning, one of the strengths of the teaching at Key Stage 4. Pupils are generally well managed at both key stages, although occasional unnecessary noise and movement about the room cause minor disturbances and sometimes interrupt learning. Assessment is another strength, especially at Key Stage 4, where self-assessment is built into each lesson and realistic targets for improvement are discussed and set jointly with the teachers. Very good use is made of resources using technology at Key Stage 4. A minor weakness is the lack of other resources such as protractors at Key Stage 3, which cause interruptions to the normal

smooth flow of lessons.

144. Good quality field visits in every year significantly enhance the overall quality of learning. Social skills are greatly improved through interaction when pupils engage in survey work. Fieldwork and its subsequent analysis in the classroom has a significant positive effect on helping pupils develop independent research skills, as well as raising their ability to make decisions and think through the whole process in detail. Geography is a well-coordinated subject and has shown significant improvement since the last inspection, with better quality teaching and learning and rising standards over time.

## **History**

145. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 indicate that pupils' attainment is in line with national averages and at a broadly similar level to most other subjects in the school. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the 1998 GCSE examinations was slightly above the national average. The performance of boys and girls in 1998 was similar but girls performed far better than the boys in 1999. Over the past three years, the GCSE results at grades A\*-C have fluctuated considerably, with the figures for 1997 and for 1999 well below the figures for 1998. These changes may be accounted for by the considerable turbulence in the staffing of the history department in recent years, which has affected both the quality of teaching and the aptitudes of pupils opting to study the subject in Years 10 and 11. In the A-level examinations in 1998, the results for the small number of students entered were well below the national average. In 1999, a similar proportion gained grades A-E as in 1998.

146. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectation. Pupils enter the school with limited historical skills. For example, about half the members of a Year 7 class had some grasp of the importance of putting events in the correct chronological order but only a small minority were able to describe the characteristics of the period under study. By the end of Year 9 they have a good range of historical competencies. They are able to analyse a range of historical sources quickly and extract relevant information, drawing appropriate conclusions. Some pupils start to evaluate historical sources for accuracy and bias. Based on the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is also in line with expectations. Again, pupils use historical sources with facility and are able to compare life in different historical periods. A Year 11 group learning about the nature of crime and punishment in Ancient Rome were able to contrast it with twentieth century practice. Few pupils in Key Stage 4 demonstrate skills in discussing historical issues. In particular, girls of all levels of attainment are reticent about expressing themselves.

147. Pupils' progress throughout Key Stage 3 is good. They are generally committed to their studies. Careful planning by the teacher, effective consolidation of earlier learning and a clear focus on learning objectives are positive factors. Pupils are invariably clear about their tasks, which are demanding but achievable. Most show a strong commitment to their studies, and ask for and get help when it is needed. Work is effectively differentiated so that all pupils progress at the same rate. At Key Stage 4, their progress is satisfactory. Teaching is to mixed ability groups but lessons often fail to address all levels of attainment effectively so that the work undertaken by lower and higher attaining pupils can be unsuitable, resulting in a failure to progress at the optimum rate. However, most pupils are clear about their tasks and are engaged in suitable activities, and so progress at a better rate.

148. Most pupils enjoy history and respond well. They are keen to answer questions and readily work in pairs and small groups, helping one another with their tasks. At their best, they participate with confidence in the lesson, expressing views easily and respecting each other's opinions. Concentration can falter, and it is frequently dependent on the teacher maintaining the pace of the lesson, although pupils generally resume their tasks when reminded. Occasionally, progress can be slowed by lapses in behaviour. In some lessons, a minority of boys, most frequent in Key Stage 4, proved disruptive. Their constant talk at inappropriate times can sometimes have a negative effect on the progress of lessons. The behaviour and attitudes of the girls are invariably good, although they tend to lack self-confidence in class.



149. The teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. Good planning and secure subject knowledge typify lessons. There is usually a good range of interesting activities to maintain pupils' interest and work is pitched at the correct level for the range of attainment in the class. Lessons have a good pace, and pupils are constantly challenged to do better. Teachers manage their pupils effectively at all stages of the lesson and relationships are good. These factors and a clear focus on usually explicit learning objectives ensure that progress is generally good. A very good Year 9 lesson, investigating social conditions in nineteenth century Nottingham, provided a good range of written, pictorial and statistical data for pupils to examine. After a brisk but clear introduction, pupils were organised to work on computers and with printed sources to find out the details of the way of life and death in this industrial slum. Pupils made very good progress in their understanding of the significant issues in this study. In common with Key Stage 4, work is well marked and homework is used as an effective adjunct to lessons. The teaching at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. It is less good than at Key Stage 3 due to some weaknesses in providing work to match the wide range of pupils' attainment in classes. This leads to difficulties both in keeping pupils on task and in stretching the higher attaining pupils. Other aspects of teaching remain good. The teacher has good expertise in the subject, works at good pace, and has expectations of high quality work, which are often met.

150. The head of department has been in post for just over a year and has benefited from good line management in this period. Before her appointment, instability in staffing left a weakened department. Structures are now in place to enable the department to move forward. As an example, the curriculum is now fully planned and meets statutory requirements. Appropriate and accurate assessment procedures are in place, and the results of these assessments are starting to feed into classroom practice. While accommodation on two sites is difficult and classrooms cramped, the quantity and quality of books has lately improved and is starting to have an impact on attainment. Since the last inspection pupils' attainment is at similar levels although there have been big fluctuations in GCSE performance. Assessment, which was unsatisfactory in the last inspection report, now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

### **Information technology**

151. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 indicated that pupils' attainment was in line with the national average for the proportion attaining Level 5 or above. The GCSE results in 1998 for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C were slightly above the national average. Although there was a slight decline in the proportion of grades A\*-C in 1999, the trend over the three years from 1996 - 1998 is one of gradual improvement. The results over the past two years show that the performance of girls is better than that of boys. The small number of students entered for the A-level examinations in computer studies all achieved grades A-E. The numbers are too few to make valid comparisons with the national figures.

152. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectation. Pupils are confident in their use of the word processing program. They create text, use the spell check facility, and use the cut and paste sequence to edit and correct their work. When using desktop publishing programs, they select and place graphic images and adjust the size to fit a publication. When constructing a database, pupils are able to enter the relevant information and display their findings in graph form. Pupils use formulae to solve easy mathematical problems when using a spreadsheet. The more confident computer users understand the production of a multi-media presentation. Although they have some experience of controlling events with the use of the Logo program in mathematics, pupils' knowledge is limited, as there is insufficient equipment to meet the requirements of the programmes of study. With the exception of control, pupils' attainment has improved since the last inspection.

153. Pupils' attainment overall by the end of Key Stage 4 is below the standard expected. This arises because Year 11 pupils, with the exception of the three GCSE groups, are not taught information technology. However, the knowledge and skills of the pupils following the GCSE course are better and are in line with expectations. Pupils use a variety of programs with confidence. They have a good

understanding of database work, classify and retrieve information, and have an understanding of its use in a wider context. When using a desktop publishing program, they use art images, scan and place text appropriately and have an awareness of design. An example of this was a topic to produce a logo for a business card, using the word program as the host and applying a variety of techniques and programs to refine their product. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement of students' attainment in the sixth form.

154. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 through the provision of a specific course in information technology. Pupils enter the school with variable previous experience but during the key stage they make satisfactory progress to reach the standard expected nationally in most aspects of the programme of study. In Year 7, appropriate tasks are provided to match their level of attainment. They learn the basics of word processing, the practical skills of the keyboard and how to set out their work appropriately.

An example of this was the correct layout of a party invitation. In Year 8, pupils consolidate previous work, use their skills to produce posters using a desktop program, and develop an understanding of database work. By the time they reach Year 9, they have extended their knowledge in a variety of techniques and skills. Progress has continued since the previous inspection

155. Pupils' progress overall at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. Pupils in the Year 11 GCSE course make satisfactory progress, and they develop a deeper understanding of word processing techniques and database work through well structured schemes of work that provide appropriate experiences using a variety of programs. Approximately half of Year 11 is not taught information technology and fail, therefore, to make sufficient progress. Although the delivery of information technology is identified in subject schemes of work, with the exception of geography, it is under used as a tool across the curriculum to promote understanding and learning. Pupils with special educational needs do not benefit from extra support, but teachers are aware of their needs and they achieve the targets set for them.

156. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They are well behaved, take good care of equipment and settle to work quickly. They concentrate well, are anxious to discuss their work and previous experiences, and often work in their own time to complete assignments. They display a good level of interest and remain on task through the sessions, persevere with their work and ask for help when necessary.

157. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and occasionally good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this contributes to the progress that pupils make. Lessons are appropriately planned to develop pupils' skills in a systematic way. Teachers circulate well in lessons, giving support, keeping pupils on track and demanding high levels of good behaviour. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are given targets at the beginning of the lesson, there are frequent stops to share good work and good demonstrations of skills, and lessons conclude with a clear evaluation. This was most noticeable in a Year 11 lesson, where the teacher gave a clear demonstration of the 'find and replace' technique to small groups of pupils. This strategy had a positive effect on their progress. The teaching is occasionally weakened when lesson planning fails to meet the needs of individual pupils, insufficient explanation is given at the beginning of the lesson, leaving pupils confused, and the lesson has a slow start. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection.

158. Much of the curriculum has been revised since the last inspection and is now broadly balanced, offering a wide experience for pupils, although it does not fully meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4. There is a manageable system for assessing pupils' progress, together with self-assessment by the pupil. The management of the department is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The coordinator provides good support for colleagues and has a vision for the future of the subject. Although the computer suites are well equipped, there is insufficient space for pupils to have easy access to computers when there are whole class groups. This is restricting their progress.

## **Modern foreign languages**

159. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 indicate that pupils' attainment is below the national average. In the GCSE examinations in 1998, the results at grades A\*-C were below the national averages in both French and German, and below the average for most other subjects in the school. A number of pupils were either absent for the examinations or not entered. In recent years, the GCSE results in modern languages have not risen whilst the results in most of the other school subjects have improved. There was a significant decline in the proportion of grades A\*-C attained in French in the 1999 examinations. In both 1998 and 1999, the performance of the girls in French was better than that of the boys, and the difference was greater than that found nationally. In German, the girls performed better than the boys in 1998 but their performance was more even in 1999. The number of students entered for the A-level examination in 1998 and 1999 was very small, which makes comparisons with the national figures inappropriate. The results in French in 1999 showed a slight improvement over the results in 1998 when they were below the national average. In German, all students entered in both years gained grades A-E.

160. From their work, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is below the standard expected nationally. At Key Stage 3, this is lower than the teachers' assessments in 1998 would indicate, but reflects the GCSE results in both 1998 and 1999. Students in the sixth form achieve standards that are in line with course requirements. There are no significant differences in attainment between the different groups of pupils in the school or across the four aspects of the subject. In general, pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards in relation to their prior attainment. Some higher attaining pupils do not reach their maximum level because of a lack of work that is adequately challenging for their level of attainment and little extension work for pupils who finish their work quickly. There has been no improvement in standards since the last inspection.

161. At Key Stage 3, pupils answer questions, in a basic way, about such topics as parts of the human body, people's descriptions and character, pocket money, food and drink and booking holidays. A substantial minority of pupils have poor listening skills and find it difficult to listen to the teacher or to other pupils. Their listening skills are usually satisfactory when listening to audiotapes. When speaking, pupils' responses are often limited to two or three exchanges, but many are confident speakers and they try hard with their pronunciation. Pupils in Year 8, for instance, are able to make requests from the teacher, and many in Year 9 vary their use of language to fit new situations. Pupils' reading skills are limited, usually to skimming short passages to find the answers to questions. There is little evidence of reading of any length or of pupils using a wider range of texts. In their written work, most pupils move from writing single words and phrases to producing a number of sentences and paragraphs by the end of the key stage. Standards of written work improve particularly in Year 9. Higher attaining pupils produce some extended writing, but, overall, the quality and accuracy of the work is not particularly high. Listening and responding are the weakest aspects at Key Stage 3 because many pupils, especially at the start of the key stage in Year 7, do not have good concentration or listening skills.

162. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils return to these topics and add others such as descriptions of their home town and other places, letters to pen friends about family life, and their relationships with other people. Their listening and responding skills are much improved. A wider range of language is used when speaking and good work occurred, for example, in a Year 10 German class who were using role-play to book into a campsite. In written work, pupils extend their vocabulary and use of tenses to produce letters describing their families and to complain about facilities in hotels and on campsites.

163. In the sixth form, students write at greater length and produce some good work, often with touches of humour and using a full range of tenses. Good discussion pieces were seen, for example, about the Pompidou Centre, marriage, and German and British politics. When speaking, students are able to hold some quite sophisticated conversations when discussing their work or other topics.

164. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form. Boys, in general, make less progress than girls, although this is less so in some Year 9 classes where good teaching is overcoming boys' reluctance to play a full part in the lessons. Pupils with special

educational needs make satisfactory progress. This is helped by the setting arrangements and the efforts that are made in some classes to give them extra support, but, in general, there is a lack of work in class which is tailored to their specific needs. Some pupils make insufficient progress in Key Stage 3 because the work in class is often not sufficiently challenging and there is little extension work for pupils who work quickly. This is less so in Key Stage 4 where the examination requirements provide greater flexibility. There is no significant difference in progress made by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

165. Most pupils have satisfactory attitudes to work and behaviour in lessons is usually good. The numbers taking French and German in the sixth form are small. Most pupils are friendly and relationships in class are good. There has been a high turnover of staff recently, resulting in high levels of disaffection with both languages, especially in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4. In a small minority of lessons, this shows itself in poor behaviour, aggressive attitudes, and rudeness to the teacher.

166. The quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory, and sometimes good. All teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Both teachers and pupils make appropriate use of the language being taught. Where the teaching is good, the teacher plans the lesson carefully to manage a range of activities that provide interest and actively involve the pupils, which ensure that they use, vary and extend their language. These activities include role-play, group work and imaginative use of the overhead projector, as well as speaking and writing tasks. Pupils' books are regularly marked and corrected, often with helpful comments from the teacher to point the way forward. Where the teaching has weaknesses it is usually because the strategies to cope with hostile and challenging behaviour shown by a number of pupils are not strong enough. In general, however, teachers control and manage pupils in lessons well. Inconsistent use is made of information technology to enhance the curriculum provision.

167. The handbook and schemes of work for both subjects are comprehensive and provide a good level of continuity across and within the key stages. A number of residential trips, a school exchange visit and a European drama project make a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Sixth form students are able to undertake work experience in the exchange town, which provides good language development. The head of department has few structured opportunities to monitor and support teaching in the two languages, which is limiting the development of a wider range of teaching strategies. Resources are satisfactory, overall, but the deficiencies raised in the previous report remain and teachers still need to carry equipment with them from site to site.

168. The department has suffered from a high level of turnover in staffing which has had a serious effect on pupils' attitudes and on their attainment and progress. A committed team of teachers is now bringing much needed stability to both French and German and is already having a positive effect on the quality of education for the pupils.

### **Music**

169. The proportion of pupils gaining the expected level in the teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 and in 1999 were below the national figures. The results of the GCSE examination in 1998 for pupils gaining grades A\*-C were above the national average although only a small number of pupils were entered. In the 1999 GCSE examination, both pupils entered achieved a grade A, but the numbers are too few to make a meaningful comparison with the national averages.

170. Pupils' attainment overall by the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national expectations but is better in performance. Pupils are beginning to read formal notation, are able to recognise the notes on the keyboard, play simple melodies from memory with sound rhythmic qualities, and understand the construction of a primary chord. These skills were noticeable in a Year 9 Samba topic when pupils successfully fitted a melody to an accompaniment with accuracy, coupled with some creative improvisation. Pupils have had the opportunities to compose their own music but because of weaknesses in their general knowledge, their compositions are lacking in structure, form and creative development. Although there is provision in the schemes of work for the listening component of the National Curriculum,

pupils' knowledge of the historical development and styles of music is limited. Standards in music have not improved since the last inspection, particularly with regard to creative development.

171. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national expectation. Many of the pupils are instrumentalists, have sound knowledge of the main elements of music and are using their knowledge and understanding to develop their compositions. An example of this was in the Year 10 group who were successfully adding a melody to a given bass line that was harmonically correct. Pupils in Year 11 have a better understanding of the main historical developments and are able to identify different periods of music. This knowledge is contributing to the creative development of compositions that have structure and form. Pupils have no opportunities to use music information technology programs for composition.

172. Although pupils' progress in lessons is satisfactory, their progress over time at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. The contributory factor to their lack of progress has been the inconsistent approach to appraising and composition in the schemes of work. Pupils enter the school with a varied background in music but with schemes of work that now provide continuity, and an emphasis on practical work, there is now evidence that their progress is improving. This was noticeable in Year 8 when pupils were adding electronic percussion accompaniments to a Rock 'n Roll tune and also in a Year 9 class, where pupils were encouraged to use their improvisation skills. Their progress at Key Stage 4 improves and is satisfactory. Through a structured programme of work, they build on, and consolidate, previous experiences. Pupils who receive extra instrumental lessons progress well with their theoretical knowledge. However not all pupils have the opportunity to have regular specialist lessons, and consequently their progress with performance is slower. Although pupils with special educational needs do not receive extra support in lessons, teachers are aware of their needs. They are often linked with more confident pupils and achieve appropriate targets.

173. Pupils' attitude in lessons is good. They have a positive approach to the subject and enjoy practical work. They listen carefully to instructions and take an interest in the subject. They are attentive when other pupils are performing, particularly noticeable in a Year 9 improvisation session. Generally, their behaviour is good but there are occasions when the conduct of a minority is unacceptable. Pupils use the equipment with care and are keen to discuss their previous musical experiences. On the occasions when pupils have to share keyboards, they are sensible and help each other during practice sessions.

174. The overall quality of teaching at both key stages is at least satisfactory, and occasionally good. Teachers have good expertise and transfer their enthusiasm to the pupils. Lessons are planned to meet the pupils' individual needs and teachers use their skills effectively to demonstrate the music. Teachers use a range of teaching strategies, including a good recap of previous work, the highlighting of good work, and encouraging pupils to perform, thus keeping them clearly focused on their tasks. Teaching is occasionally weakened when there is no evaluation at the end of the lesson, resources are inappropriately organised for practical sessions, and lessons that are too directed by the teacher, with a lack of practical activities to sustain pupils' interest.

175. The curriculum is being revised to reflect the programmes of study for the National Curriculum. Although assessment procedures are in place, there are inconsistencies in practice. Not all pupils' progress and attainment are assessed regularly. There is also a lack of emphasis on audio recordings of pupils' creative work. A newly qualified teacher leads the department, who in the short period since her appointment is already beginning to have an impact on the department, through developing new schemes of work and a commitment to raising standards.

176. Departmental accommodation is poor, and there are insufficient quiet areas for individual practice. The resources for listening to recorded music are poor. The lack of a suitable stereo system is hampering the development of pupils' listening skills and appreciation of music. Although there are sufficient keyboards for pupils to use, the arrangements for their use are unsatisfactory. The lack of sufficient electrical plugs, and extension leads with trailing wires, are a potential hazard. The suitability of the

accommodation and the adequacy of the resources were issues in the last inspection report and have not been improved.

### **Physical education**

177. Teachers' assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicates that only a very small number of pupils attained the expected level. There is much evidence to suggest that these assessments are inaccurate and do not reflect pupils' current attainment which is in line with the standard expected nationally. A small number of pupils are entered for the GCSE examination in physical education. The GCSE results in 1999 for the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C were slightly above the national average and are a considerable improvement on previous years.

178. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' skills in basketball, netball and hockey are in line with expectations, especially in marking their opponents, passing accurately, receiving the ball and applying these skills into more complex game situations. In dance, pupils are able to choreograph a simple effective sequence using a variety of motifs developed during the lesson. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is also in line with national expectations. Pupils are able to evaluate their performance, in hockey for example, during the development of complex dribbling skills with a partner and in small-sided games. In a netball lesson, pupils coach their partners towards improvement. Pupils in a GCSE theory lesson develop their understanding of fitness through a wide variety of appropriate tasks. No physical education was observed in the sixth form and therefore it is not possible to make judgements about the students' attainment.

179. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4. In some games lessons at Key Stage 3 they also make good progress. Using a variety of tasks, their skills of sending and receiving the ball improve and are successfully brought together in paired, group and game situations. At Key Stage 4, pupils made excellent progress in a GCSE lesson in which the relationship between the cardio-respiratory system and pulse rate was explored and developed. Planning for pupils with special educational needs is weak. Teachers are aware of pupils with individual education plans but do not plan accordingly and consequently they do not make as much progress as they are capable of making.

180. Pupils show good attitudes in physical education. All pupils dress appropriately. They are enthusiastic, well behaved, and interested in their activities. Pupils cooperate effectively in group activities. In a Year 8 basketball lesson, pupils worked well together in a half court game to identify specific roles, with pupils themselves identifying successfully umpires and positional roles. Attendance and participation rates are high. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good, which is a reflection of the positive ethos of the department.

181. The quality of teaching is good overall. It varies from unsatisfactory to excellent but mostly it is good. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department at both key stages. This strength is characterised by the teachers' specialist knowledge, good control, a sensitive style, and effective short term planning. Lessons start well and develop in clear stages. Weaknesses are few but opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate their own and others' work are limited. In a dance and health related fitness lesson, some attempt was made to include day-to-day assessment which was then used to group pupils for their work in subsequent lessons. Planning for the full range of attainment is often weak but appropriate adjustments are made for individual differences in lessons. In the most effective lessons, pupils are motivated by the enthusiasm of the teacher, tasks and resources are challenging and planned to meet the needs of the pupils.

182. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and is augmented by the addition of the GCSE course at Key Stage 4. This provides a broad and balanced curriculum. The allocation of time has improved at Key Stage 3 but remains slightly below average at Key Stage 4. There is a varied extra-curricular programme at lunchtimes and after school, which is valued by pupils. Day-to-day

management of the subject is good, with teamwork a strong feature, but some weaknesses are evident. Financial control is good but departmental development planning lacks timescales and success criteria. Staff responsibilities are not clearly defined. Staff development is not adequately planned for. Schemes of work are not supported by units of work and assessment is not used sufficiently to inform curriculum planning. There is no assessment policy but its development is included in the current departmental development plan. This remains an issue from the last inspection. Accommodation is broadly satisfactory but variable and is better at the upper school. However, the Dutch Barn, which is in poor condition, is in need of much improvement, although the department uses it effectively for the benefit of the pupils.

### **Religious education**

183. Results on the GCSE religious studies course, an option at Key Stage 4, have declined over recent years. At the time of the last inspection, pupils achieved grades above or well above the national average. In 1998, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well below the national average. For pupils who do not follow the GCSE course at Key Stage 4, the required provision is not made and it is not possible to make judgements about pupils' attainment or progress. Similarly, in the sixth form, there is no provision for religious education or religious studies.

184. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in religious education is in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Pupils know the distinctive beliefs and practices of Christianity and of other major religions. They understand the meaning of important religious ideas and recognise similarities across religions. They know how to interpret and apply religious beliefs to their own experience of life. They are unsure about the differences, and the reasons for the differences, within religions. Pupils' attainment on the GCSE examination course is below average. Most pupils are unlikely to achieve grades A\*-C but many are close to the C/D boundary and may, with sustained good teaching, exceed present expectations.

185. Pupils' progress at Key Stage 3 is nearly always satisfactory and often good or better. When pupils are stimulated and challenged to express and evaluate difficult ideas they make excellent gains in their understanding of the nature of truth and the quest for meaning. Progress is very good when, through speaking and writing about the deepest aspects of human life, pupils develop precision of thought and feeling. In Year 7, pupils whose writing skills are limited by their low levels of literacy make unsatisfactory progress. The progress made by the higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 is less than expected when written tasks fail to stretch them sufficiently. Pupils following the GCSE course make good progress. They acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for the examination but at times are insufficiently stimulated to reach higher levels of understanding and critical thought.

186. Pupils' response to religious education at Key Stage 3 is nearly always at least satisfactory and usually better than this. They show the greatest enthusiasm when they have the opportunity to combine the skills of listening and speaking, reading and writing, in order to explain and evaluate different points of view. Pupils work very well in groups, learning from each other in shared activities. There is courtesy and respect for religious beliefs and for other people's feelings. Most pupils behave well and the few who misbehave are separated from the rest of the class. Take-up rates for GCSE are usually good enough to produce a viable group for religious studies. The present Year 11 group is positive in attitude but lacking in confidence. They prefer structured rather than open-ended learning. An increase in confidence in themselves as learners would raise their levels of success in the examination.

187. Nearly all the teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory, and most is good or very good and occasionally excellent. Teaching of the GCSE group is consistently good. Teachers use their secure knowledge and understanding of religion to stimulate and to challenge pupils' thinking. Lessons are planned well, often with high expectations for most pupils. The learning intentions are shared with pupils but the language in which they are expressed is sometimes too abstract to be of benefit. The level of challenge in open-ended oral work is appropriately high but some written tasks are too undemanding for the higher attaining pupils. Teachers generally manage pupils well and sometimes their insistence on pupils

learning rather than just doing achieves the highest standard of discipline. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that in learning about a religion pupils also learn more about themselves.

188. There has been some progress since the last inspection. All pupils at Key Stage 3 now have the benefit of specialist teaching and systematic assessment, but teachers do not use the statements of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 to monitor each pupil's progress. At Key Stage 4, the situation has deteriorated. The module of religious education formerly provided has been withdrawn from the social education programme and not replaced. Results in the GCSE examination in religious studies have declined substantially. There is now no provision for most pupils at Key Stage 4 and no provision at all in the sixth form. The school does not give its pupils their minimum statutory entitlement and so gives poor value for money in this part of the curriculum. Provision for all at Key Stage 4 is planned but the implications for staffing and the budget, and on other subject areas, have not yet been addressed.



## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

189. Thirteen inspectors, including a lay inspector, spent a total of 52 days in the school, gathering first hand evidence. During the week, 176 lessons or parts of lessons were inspected. Some 160 hours were spent in the direct observation of lessons, discussions with pupils and the scrutiny of their work. In addition, inspectors attended assemblies, a large number of morning and afternoon registration sessions, and a range of extra-curricular activities. All teachers present in the school during the week of the inspection were observed teaching at least once and most on several occasions. Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils, including all the available written work of a representative sample of six pupils from each year group and the pupil with a statement of special educational need. Informal discussions were held with pupils during lessons and at other times. Inspectors looked at pupils' work on display in classrooms and around the school.

190. Planned discussions were also held with all members of staff with management and other responsibilities; the chair of the governing body and three other governors; several teachers, including newly qualified staff; and many non-teaching and support staff. A wide range of documentation provided by the school was analysed, including the school's development and budget plans, school policies, schemes of work and teachers' planning. Before the inspection the Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 26 parents/guardians. Responses from 50 parents' questionnaires were analysed.

## 191. DATA AND INDICATORS

### Pupil data

	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
Y7 – Y13	660	1	190	158

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)

36.75
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Number of pupils per qualified teacher

18
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#### Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff

10
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Total aggregate hours worked each week

281.0
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Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:

76.0
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Average teaching group size:

KS3

25
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KS4

21
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### Financial data

Financial year:

1998/99
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	£
Total Income	1,709,356
Total Expenditure	1,670,878
Expenditure per pupil	2,619
Balance brought forward from previous year	23,364

Balance carried forward to next year	61,842
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## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

508

Number of questionnaires returned:

50

### 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	56	22	8	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	60	32	8	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	36	40	19	4	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	18	54	12	16	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	26	54	14	6	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	28	64	6	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	32	56	12	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	22	58	8	12	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	24	60	12	2	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	20	53	18	8	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	36	50	12	2	0

### Other issues raised by parents

- Concerns that not all children are stretched to their fullest extent.
- Some parents of pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 would like information from the school about their children a little sooner than currently.
- Concerns about the inconsistency in the setting, and the amount, of homework given to pupils.