

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THORPE ST ANDREW SCHOOL**

Norwich

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121180

Headteacher: Dr David Bullard

Reporting inspector: Mr Keith Davitte  
15029

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> January 2000

Inspection number: 185213

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Laundry Lane  
Thorpe St Andrew  
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Norfolk  
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Professor Roy Davies

Date of previous inspection: May 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr K Davitte	Registered inspector		The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
Ms C Laverock	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
			Links with the community
Mr B Meech	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mr D Innes	Team inspector	English	
		Special educational needs	
Dr C Millband	Team inspector	Science	
Mr J Sheffield	Team inspector	Art	
Mr I Hodgkinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
		Design and technology	
Mr J Knight	Team inspector	Geography	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Mr D Martin	Team inspector	History	
Mr R Bulman	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
		Equal opportunities	
Dr J Harvey	Team inspector	Music, drama	
Ms C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
Mr H Davies	Team inspector	Religious education	
Dr B Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics and science	
Mr W Stoneham	Team inspector	Sixth form	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Thorpe St Andrew is a co-educational 11-18 comprehensive school with 1583 pupils on roll and is much bigger than most secondary schools. There are 246 students in the sixth form. One hundred and nineteen pupils are eligible for free school meals which is below average. Only 18 pupils are from minority ethnic groups which is well below average. No pupils are recorded by the school as having English as an additional language. One hundred and fifty-four pupils have special educational needs and 23 have statements which is below average. The attainment of the majority of pupils on entry to the school is above average, but literacy levels of a minority have been a concern of the school in recent years.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school with some very effective features. Standards are well above average in a significant number of areas. The school is well led and there is a clear will and desire to improve further. Strengths greatly outweigh weaknesses and with greater consistency in the application of some policies the school is well capable of making further major strides. The strength of most of the teaching provides a firm basis for doing so. The school gives good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Above average test and examination results overall compared with similar schools nationally
- Mainly good and a significant proportion of very good teaching have raised standards
- Initiatives to improve reading skills of those needing support at Key Stage 3 are very effective
- An excellent range of extra-curricular activities secures a high level of pupil involvement
- Provision for pupils' cultural development through art, music, drama and English is strong
- Social development is very good and support for pupils' welfare plays a major part in promoting equality of opportunity
- The school is well led and leadership has a very clear vision for the future
- Governors play a key role in shaping the direction of the school

#### **What could be improved**

- GCSE results in modern foreign languages particularly boys' results in French
- The range of curriculum choices for lower attainers at Key Stage 4 and opportunities for all A-level students to extend their key skills including in information and communication technology
- Accommodation in many areas
- The frequency of classroom observations of teaching and learning by managers
- The extension of individual pupil targets already being used successfully in Year 11
- The quality of school reports on pupils' progress
- Provision for religious education to meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth-form, and the provision of a daily act of collective worship

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Much improvement has been made. When the school was last inspected in 1995 teaching was only satisfactory or better in 80 per cent of lessons compared with the much higher 96 per cent at this inspection. Standards of pupils' work have improved and are now mostly above average or better at Key Stage 3. There has been an upward and significant trend in GCSE results to reflect more accurately what pupils should be achieving. Standards in the sixth form have also improved and have usually been well above average. School planning is now much better with accurate priorities and related staff development. Levels of monitoring have improved, but have not addressed all inconsistencies in the application of policies. Despite much representation and bids, accommodation has not improved. Breaches in statutory requirements in religious education and through not providing a daily act of collective worship remain.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year-olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 tests	A	B	A	B
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	C	

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

In 1999, Key Stage 3 results were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English compared with all schools. Longer term trends show well above average results in English and mathematics and above average in science, and such standards were seen during the inspection. In other subjects at Key Stage 3 standards are at least in line with national expectations and often better. Across all subjects at Key Stage 3 overall standards and achievement are good.

GCSE results at grades A\*-C in 1999 were well above average in the majority of subjects including in English, mathematics and double science, but were well below in single science. Whereas girls were broadly average in business studies, French and graphics, boys were well below. Mainly lower attainers in automotive engineering and catering achieved well at A\*-G, but were well below average at A\*-C. Similar standards to previous GCSE results were seen at the inspection, but standards were higher in modern languages and graphics. Overall standards and achievement are good.

Current A-level standards in Year 13 indicate a return to the higher examination results of 1997 and 1998. Despite a decline in 1999 many in that year group achieved well compared with their previous performance. A-level results in that year were at least above average in most subjects and particularly good at both A-E and the higher A-B grades in English literature, physics, physical education/sports studies, psychology and with small numbers in economics. Results were below average in history and biology and well below in chemistry, and not as good as in recent years. Currently standards at A-level are not as high in psychology but are above average. They are better in biology and history with average standards, and slightly better in chemistry but still below average. GNVQ results were not as high in 1999 as in the two previous years, but most current students are at least in line with national expectations and some, on the leisure and tourism and health and social care courses, are well above average. In the sixth form overall standards and achievement are very good.

Standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening are good for the majority and much higher in the sixth form. Those with poor reading skills on entry in Year 7 make very good and sometimes excellent progress. Whilst the majority listen carefully and with interest a small minority of reluctant learners at Key Stage 4 do not. Good numeracy skills are successfully promoted in mathematics. Skills in information and communication technology (ICT) meet national expectations overall, although greater use could be made of ICT in teaching subjects across the curriculum.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: attitudes are good overall and very good in the sixth form
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall but poor by a minority of pupils. Most respond well to opportunities to take responsibility.
Personal development and relationships	Good: the vast majority of pupils form constructive and supportive relationships. They respect the strengths of others and understand their difficulties
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average and unauthorised absence is well below

The good attitudes and behaviour of the great majority make a significant contribution to the quality of learning and pupils' progress. The minority of unsatisfactory behaviour during the inspection was confined to Years 9, 10 and 11. Some lower attaining pupils, at Key Stage 4 in particular, are occasionally unpleasant to others, including some teachers and do not enjoy their studies. They show scant regard for the school's dress code and therefore stand out. Litter is a recurring problem and some pupils do not take enough pride in their property or that of the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of the 257 lessons observed, very good or better in 33 per cent of lessons, and good or better in 70 per cent. Teaching was good overall in English, often very good and particularly effective in the way it challenges all pupils. In mathematics teaching was predominantly very good with the best at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form but there is further room for challenging the highest attainers at Key Stage 4. Teaching in science is more variable but is good overall, with notable examples of very good and excellent teaching, particularly in physics. The quality of learning and progress is good at all stages with mostly good teaching working hand-in-hand with the above average levels of interest, concentration and independence shown by the majority of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress. A small minority of pupils, mostly boys in Years 9, 10 and 11, make poor progress in some lessons when interest wanes or when they decide not to work, despite the efforts of teachers. Teachers' expectations are good but not uniformly so in all subjects. In the sixth form expectations are very good. There is a good emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum including recognition of the need to improve standards of spelling. The consistency of marking could be strengthened by making it crystal clear to pupils what they need to do to improve further.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Mainly broad and balanced with aspects of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form requiring additional breadth.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: enabling good progress. Withdrawal classes to improve literacy are very effective.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: satisfactory for spiritual; good for moral and cultural, with a particularly strong provision for cultural in art, music, drama and English; very good for social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: a very well integrated team ensures that pupils are well supported. There are good links with external agencies.

At Key Stage 4 the curriculum does not provide sufficient choice for lower attainers. In addition outside the GNVQ provision there are limited opportunities for students to develop their key skills and enrich their studies in the sixth form. The school is not meeting statutory requirements at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in relation to religious education. Overall most pupils benefit from the increased curriculum opportunities provided in a big school. There is some very good use of assessment data at whole-school level to monitor progress and good use of individual targets for pupils in Year 11. The school works satisfactorily in partnership with parents and carers, but despite some very clear and informative publications the best use is not being made of existing channels of communication such as the home-school 'Link' diary and pupils' reports.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led at senior level and has been effective in raising standards. Most departments and other major curriculum areas are also well led.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a very good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are both positive and supportive in their actions. Some statutory requirements are breached in the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is strong and on-going evaluation through analysis of test and examination data with outcomes put to good effect.
The strategic use of resources	Spending is closely linked to the correct priorities of the school plan in order to maximise the resources of the tight budget.

The proportion of the budget spent on staffing has been reduced to average levels since the last inspection. This has been achieved at the same time as standards being raised. There is now a better balance of experience and new blood on the staff. There is pressure on technician time, for example with the growing computer network, and on special needs staff with the added demands of withdrawal classes and some changes in the intake to the school. Accommodation remains a problem with the efficiency of some departments and science in particular affected by scattered or unsuitable teaching rooms. Spending on learning resources is now about average, but there is some ground to be made up in replenishing stock in some areas. Governors have taken pragmatic and enterprising steps to raise funding by the successful appointment of a part-time development officer. The school mostly applies 'best value' principles to spending, but although the sixth form functions without being a cost on the rest of the school, the cost effectiveness of that provision is not analysed routinely. Improvements could be made in development planning in art, and science operates too much as separate subjects rather than an integrated team.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their child is making good progress</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem</li> <li>• The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> <li>• Children become mature and responsible</li> <li>• The interesting range of activities outside lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consistency and the quality of homework</li> <li>• The information on pupils' progress</li> </ul>

Inspection findings agree with the positive view of parents and carers of 'what pleases them most'. Whilst the majority are not dissatisfied with homework a significant minority of respondents to the pre-inspection questionnaire were unhappy with this aspect of the school. Inspectors found better standards during the inspection with homework in the sixth form very good, but there is sufficient concern for the school to monitor this provision regularly. The potential of the 'Link' diary is not fully realised as there are too many gaps in pupils' entries on homework. Again it is a significant minority who are dissatisfied with information provided on pupils' progress. Inspectors agree that more could be done. An improvement in school reports would go some considerable way to addressing this issue. Most reports need to be less general and more subject specific spelling out what pupils and students can and cannot do and always stating what needs to be done to improve further. The school plans to provide more information to parents on the Key Stage 3 curriculum, which will also help.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. In 1999, results in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, were overall well above the national average compared with all schools and above average compared with similar schools. In 1999 there were no significant differences between boys and girls. When the 1999 results are broken down into individual subjects they were well above the national average in mathematics and science and above average in English compared with all schools. In 1999 mathematics achieved the best results at the higher levels (Level 6 or above) which were well above average compared with above average in English and science. Over a longer period taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together results were well above average in English and mathematics and average in science, with no significant difference between boys and girls.
2. Above average standards were seen at the end of Key Stage 3 during the inspection with the majority of pupils making good progress. Standards were well above average in English and mathematics, but there was a greater variation in science, although standards were above average overall. Where standards vary in science they are invariably linked to the quality of teaching and in some lower sets standards are not high enough. In English and mathematics teachers cater much better for the needs of such pupils. In other subjects at Key Stage 3 standards are above national expectations for the majority of pupils in art, history, religious education and in line with national expectations in design and technology, geography, information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Across all subjects at Key Stage 3 overall standards and achievement are good.
3. In GCSE examinations in 1999 the average points score per pupil (Grade A\*=8 points, A=7, B=6.....G=1) was above the national average compared with all schools and similar schools. There has been an upward trend in the GCSE points score per pupil since the last inspection which has been rising at a faster rate than the national trend. There has also been an upward trend in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C. In 1999 the school's results at 56 per cent were nearly 10 per cent higher than the national average at grades A\*-C whereas at the last inspection they were only 2.3 per cent higher. Over the past three years girls have achieved more highly than boys but both have been above average compared with boys and girls nationally.
4. In 1999 well above average results were achieved at GCSE grades A\*-C in English, English literature, mathematics, art, child development, history, geology, music, physical education and religious education. In design and technology results varied but were well above average in food technology and textiles. Although results in double science were well above average those results are inflated by the school's policy of entering a greater proportion of lower attainers for the single science examination than is the case nationally. Boys' results in business studies, French and graphics were well below average. Automotive engineering and catering with mainly lower attainers achieved well at A\*-G but were well below average at A\*-C. Similar standards to the GCSE results were seen in most subjects at Key Stage 4 during the inspection, but standards were higher in modern languages and graphics. Current overall standards and achievement are good.
5. At the highest GCSE grades A\*/A the school was about average nationally in 1999. Higher attainers did particularly well at these combined grades in 1999 in art, drama, history, music, religious education and textiles, but mainly as a result of achievements at grade A rather than A\*. History was the exception and easily achieved the best results at A\*.
6. The overall improvements in GCSE results since the last inspection were necessary as the school was underachieving at GCSE. Results at GCSE now better reflect what pupils should be achieving in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils make similar progress to that of other pupils, but the school recognises that further improvements are possible at all levels to raise the average points score further. The original GCSE targets for the year 2000, set some time ago, now look modest as the school has already exceeded the target of 53 per cent set for A\*-C

grades.

7. The average points score per pupil at A-level was well above average in relation to national averages in 1997 and 1998 but fell to only average in 1999. Comparisons with similar schools nationally are not made. Current A-level standards in Year 13 suggest a return to the higher examination results of 1997 and 1998. In 1999 many of that particular year group achieved well when their results are compared with their previous GCSE performance. A-level results were at least above average in most subjects. In mathematics they were above average at A- and A-B. Subjects performing particularly well at both A-E and the higher A-B grades were English literature, physics, physical education/sports studies, psychology and with small numbers in economics. Results were below average in history and biology and well below in chemistry, and not as good as the results of some previous years in these subjects, particularly in 1997. Standards seen at the inspection were similar in most subjects and current overall standards and achievement are very good. Standards were not as high in psychology but still above average. Standards in biology and history were better and broadly average, and better in chemistry too but still below average.
8. In 1999 only four candidates took AS-levels. Most of the 24 students taking AS-levels in the last three years have been successful at grades A-E.
9. In 1999, the results of students on courses leading to General and National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were not as high as in the two previous years. There was a 70 per cent success rate but a smaller proportion achieved merits and distinctions. Those completing the course made good progress. Most current GNVQ students are at least in line with national expectations and some, on the leisure and tourism and health and social care courses, are well above average.
10. Across the curriculum standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening are good for the majority of pupils and students in the sixth form have much higher skills. The majority read with understanding and those with poor skills on entry make very good and sometimes excellent progress in reading in special withdrawal classes. Most are able to write at length and for a range of purposes but some lower attainers struggle. There are still too many spelling errors but a whole-school literacy purge is improving matters. The majority of pupils speak confidently and discussion skills in the sixth form are very good, but some at Key Stage 4 lack such confidence and are unable to express their well thought out views convincingly in class discussions. Whilst nearly all listen carefully and with interest a small minority of reluctant learners at Key Stage 4 do not. Good numeracy skills are promoted by the emphasis on number work in mathematics. Most pupils can use graphs, bar charts and pie charts to communicate findings. Skills in ICT meet national expectations overall but there are insufficient opportunities in subjects across the curriculum to develop these skills. Access to computers at home by a high proportion of pupils helps in this process.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. Pupils' attitudes are good overall and during the inspection were very good or better in nearly 50 per cent of lessons observed. The level of interest, concentration and independence which pupils show is good overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. During the inspection attitudes were never less than satisfactory in Years 7 and 8 and in the sixth form. Lessons where attitudes were unsatisfactory were confined to Years 9 to 11 with the majority in Years 10 and 11.
12. The great majority of pupils aspire to achieve good standards but many need the inspiration of the teacher to be taken beyond that point. The time which pupils take to settle down to work at the beginning of lessons varies depending on the expectations of teachers. In food technology lessons get underway quickly with pupils and teachers turning up early sacrificing part of their break-time in order to finish a task in the allotted one hour period. Movement of pupils around the school is calm and measured. Pupils know the teachers who are tough on punctuality and respond to those expectations with greater urgency. In a minority of lessons and in some form tutor time pupils dawdle in and give flimsy excuses when late, even in the sixth form.
13. Nearly all pupils enjoy their school and appreciate the very wide range of activities provided. This judgement is supported by the views of parents. Participation rates in extra-curricular activities are well above average and particularly so in sport where nearly three quarters of all pupils are involved. Many willingly involve themselves in drama and musical productions and

the school visits. The level of boys' participation in singing is much higher than in most schools. During the week of the inspection there was an infectious and enthusiastic response to the visiting band of the Royal Air Force.

14. As at the last inspection behaviour is good. The majority of parents agree that behaviour is good but some are rightly concerned with those instances when their child is prevented from learning by the poor behaviour of others. The great majority of pupils are biddable, compliant, form good relationships and respond to the responsibility given to them to behave in a sensible manner in lessons, assemblies and around the school. This makes a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom where there are also examples of excellent behaviour. The very able and least able pupils are equally respected by their peers and pupils with special educational needs too are well integrated. A minority of pupils particularly boys and mainly at Key Stage 4 are immature and silly and occasionally unpleasant in their attitudes to others including some teachers. They do not enjoy lessons, find it difficult to cope with a traditional curriculum and are quite prepared to while away the time discussing things which are nothing to do with the lesson. When that happens they disrupt the class and prevent others from learning. Such pupils can also show scant regard for the school's dress code and therefore stand out in the school even more. Some bullying exists which is recognised by the school but most pupils feel well supported and secure.
15. The number of exclusions in the last school year was about average for the size of school with boys accounting for the majority of the 52 exclusions. Exclusions are used appropriately to deal with such instances as violence, swearing at teachers and proven theft. Twenty-one of 40 exclusions for boys involved just five Year 7 pupils and two have moved on to specialist provision. The number of exclusions so far this academic year is down on the same period of last year. Permanent exclusions are rare.
16. There are some features of the school which are out of line with its general ethos. Litter is a recurring problem. There is some vandalism of toilets. Some pupils do not take enough pride in their possessions including exercise books and some furniture is defaced with graffiti. Bright, stimulating rooms tend to escape from this and such rooms are usually associated with teachers who will not accept such behaviour.
17. Pupils respond well to opportunities to show initiative when teachers create a well structured challenge in lessons. They are generally very supportive of each other in group work showing a willingness to consider different opinions and beliefs. The vast majority form constructive and supportive relationships. They respect the strengths of others and understand their difficulties. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated. Boys and girls work together with mutual respect. A very good quality newsletter 'The Voice' is produced by a group of pupils with minimum adult assistance. There is a mature and equal contribution by representatives of all year groups on the school council and other groups have contributed to the drawing up of the home-school partnership agreement and to open evenings for parents of prospective Year 7 pupils.
18. Continuity in learning is helped by an above average attendance rate and a well below average rate of unauthorised absence.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

19. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. At this inspection teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of the 257 lessons seen and much better than the 80 per cent at the last inspection. Teaching at this inspection was very good or better in 33 per cent of lessons and good or better in 70 per cent. Teaching was good overall in English and often very good. In mathematics teaching was predominantly very good with the best at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Teaching in science is more variable but is good overall, with notable examples of very good and excellent teaching, particularly in physics.
20. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is very good in the great majority of lessons although this is less true of some non-specialists who are deployed to teach geography at Key Stage 3. The use of specialist teachers from the English, mathematics and economics departments to teach such skills on GNVQ courses in the sixth form is influential in setting the right standards and in being able to help students with any difficulties.
21. Mostly good teaching in the school works hand-in-hand with the above average levels of interest, concentration and independence shown by the majority of pupils. As a result, the

quality of learning and progress is good overall at all stages. Pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress and very good in lessons when withdrawn for special help with reading skills. Teachers know these pupils well. A small minority of pupils, mostly boys, make poor progress in some lessons in Years 9, 10 and 11 when interest wanes or when they decide not to work, despite the efforts of teachers.

22. Teachers' planning, expectations and methods are usually good. The advantages of planning are seen for example in clear introductions at the start of lessons in design and technology. There are some deficiencies in planning in business studies. In the sixth form expectations are very good and there are many examples of very good gains in creative skills and knowledge, and examples of stimulating exchanges of ideas between teachers and students. The quality of learning for lower attainers varies in some lessons in science at Key Stage 3 depending on the teaching and the degree of interest and challenge generated. Teaching in English and art is very good in the way it challenges all pupils and there is often stimulating dialogue. The breaking down of information into small steps helps lower attainers in some history lessons to progress. In English the best teaching is characterised by skilful use of questioning also apparent in physical education. In mathematics there is further room for challenging the highest attainers at Key Stage 4, but most lessons are well organised with a variety of activities which maintain interest. In science the more able pupils in each set are not challenged as much as others. Although a minority of teaching is too predictable in modern languages some lively and imaginative teaching is raising standards. In physical education, music and drama, extra-curricular activities play a particularly influential part in securing further involvement and extending skills for a wide range of pupils and visits in history.
23. The mostly very good management of lessons and quality of relationships engendered encourages all pupils to contribute. Pupils with special educational needs make similarly good progress in a supportive atmosphere. Most poor behaviour is handled well. The pace of working is good helped by teachers' good use of time and resources as seen in the best lessons in art, food technology, science and modern foreign languages. Lessons in drama in particular are conducted at a brisk pace and artefacts are skilfully used in religious education.
24. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of their learning and there are many examples of regular and conscientious marking which provides on-going help but there are inconsistencies for example in geography and religious education. In science the marking of coursework is better than elsewhere in the department, but there is some very good marking for example in Year 8 both on science content and to correct spelling errors. Marking generally across subjects could be improved by making it crystal clear in concise statements to pupils what they need to do to improve further, related to targets wherever possible. There is much ongoing assessment in lessons through good dialogue as seen to particularly good effect in art and physical education. Homework is used very well in the sixth form with satisfactory use at other stages to extend learning. The fact that every pupil has a book helps in the setting of constructive homework in history.
25. There is a good emphasis on the teaching and literacy and numeracy across the curriculum with literacy currently well promoted through a whole-school policy. The whole-school policy for improving standards in literacy is being supported by most teachers who take care to ensure that pupils not only use language appropriate to the subject they teach but also use correct spellings. Whilst there is no whole-school policy for numeracy, subject teachers reinforce wherever possible the strong and successful emphasis placed on number skills by teachers of mathematics. The use of ICT in teaching subjects across the curriculum varies with insufficient opportunities. Where there are specialist lessons for the teaching of the subject skills are well taught and there is very good integration into lessons in design and technology, vocational courses in the sixth form, and in lessons where pupils with reading difficulties are withdrawn for additional support.

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

26. The curriculum is mainly broad and balanced at all stages providing a good range of learning opportunities. Overall most pupils benefit from the increased curriculum opportunities provided in a big school including an excellent extra-curricular programme.
27. The curriculum and opportunities at Key Stage 3 are good. At Key Stage 3 provision for ICT is

good in Year 7 where it is taught in lessons specifically devoted to developing those skills. In Years 8 and 9 provision is mostly through other subjects in the curriculum, which vary considerably in the contribution which they make partly due to the difficulty of access to facilities. The contribution of design and technology in Year 9 however enables some new skills such as computer control to be taught and opportunities to revisit and reinforce existing ICT skills acquired earlier in the school. Time allocation to subjects is in line with national averages in most subjects, although the allocation to drama is low.

28. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is satisfactory. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 could be improved by providing more opportunities for lower attainers. It is balanced, but lacks breadth whilst the school awaits its planned introduction of vocational courses. There is a good range of National Curriculum subjects as well as business studies, child development, catering, drama, economics and automotive engineering. The one period a week allocated to the GCSE short course in ICT is insufficient to cover the syllabus. As at Key Stage 3 the contribution of other subjects to the teaching of ICT remains variable at this key stage.
29. All pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 follow a well planned course in personal and social education which is delivered within the school's Passport course in Years 9 to 11 and statutory requirements for health and sex education are covered. A temporary timetable difficulty has resulted in the Passport programme being too heavily weighted towards sporting activities in the current Year 11. The school's intention that religious education should be delivered through the Passport course at Key Stage 4 does not meet fully the requirements of the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus, despite the inclusion of a number of one day conferences of high quality on social and ethical issues.
30. The sixth form curriculum is good in terms of the number of A-level, A/S-level and GNVQ courses on offer and the opportunities offered to students to progress into employment or to higher education via an academic or vocational route. Extra breadth is provided by GCSE courses in geology and Italian in Year 12, but outside the GNVQ provision there are limited opportunities for students to develop their key skills and enrich their studies in the sixth form. Religious education is absent in the sixth form, which is a statutory breach.
31. There is very good provision for careers education and guidance helped considerably by information on careers and further and higher education being available in the open access careers room, which contains a well-stocked multi-media resource library. All Year 11 pupils have a two-week work experience placement and the school participates in a good industrial mentoring programme. Pupils are given good advice at times of transition between key stages and in preparation for the next phase of education. The advantages of an early start to the school day, intended to make full use of pupil alertness in the early morning, are offset somewhat by the poor use made of tutorial time in several classes on at least two mornings each week. In the sixth form students report to register, but the rest of the time is spent socialising.
32. Good and effective strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy and addressing weaknesses are in place in most subjects, although a formal policy has not yet been drawn up for numeracy. The school provides well for equality of opportunity and access, and within the constraints of timetabling and staffing, departments create teaching sets that give individuals the opportunity to fulfil their potential. There is some inequality however in physical education, where there is no provision for boys' dance. The careful choice of school productions to encourage boys' involvement is very good practice.
33. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and meets the requirement of those on the special educational needs register. Teachers are well informed of such pupils. Whilst the targets in individual education plans (IEPs) are rather general the action points are sufficiently detailed. The quality of classroom support offered by special needs support assistants is good. Withdrawal lessons are provided for pupils with pronounced difficulties in basic skills where provision is very good.
34. The school has been successful in forging links with the local community which provide opportunities for pupils to extend their skills and expertise in sporting, musical and other cultural activities, and in their knowledge of the business world. Access to the internet means that several pupils now have enriching opportunities to link with the worldwide community. There are good curricular links with the main partner feeder schools. The transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is assisted by the fact that on the first day of each new school year,

new Year 7 pupils are the only pupils in school, along with new Year 12 students.

35. The school's provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent. Of particular note is a programme of expeditions to such varied locations as Snowdonia, Isle of Arran, Italian Dolomites, Switzerland, Norway and Iceland. These expeditions offer pupils the opportunity to take part in a variety of challenging mountain activities that teach them resourcefulness, responsibility, self-reliance and tolerance of others. Many subject areas use the local area and various venues in Britain and abroad for special studies. There is a very good range of school clubs and societies associated with different curriculum areas, which play a very important part in extending learning opportunities and giving pupils new cultural, leisure and sporting experiences. School music and drama productions and performances are of a very good standard, while numerous sporting activities are supported by over 70 per cent of pupils. Parents express strong support and approval for the school's extra-curricular provision.

### **Curricular provision for personal development**

36. Overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's aims and code of conduct provide a sound foundation for this aspect of personal development. Although departments have been required to identify opportunities to raise pupils' awareness and understanding, monitoring procedures to assess the effectiveness of this policy are not yet in place.
37. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory and while some departments are still unsure of the importance of their subject in fostering spiritual awareness, there has been improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. Religious education, within the serious constraints of an inadequate time allocation after Year 9, makes a valuable contribution by enabling Key Stage 3 pupils to examine and acquire insights into beliefs, particularly from the Christian and Jewish faiths. In English, very good opportunities are provided for pupils to study a range of literature and poetry which promote understanding of emotions and traditions. In one English lesson, for example, a sensitive introduction by the teacher enabled pupils to reflect, consider and contribute to a discussion on euthanasia. In music, drama, art, geography, history and science there are some opportunities for pupils to think and test out ideas and feelings. In history, at GCSE pupils also consider justification for death and killing in battle, for example in World War 1.
38. Provision for pupils' moral development is good: the school actively promotes a framework of moral values. The majority of teachers by their own example and expectations act as good role models. The school's aims to develop values such as honesty, fairness and tolerance and pupils are clearly made aware of the differences between right and wrong. The personal education programme and assemblies cover a range of moral issues such as responsibilities, prejudice, the dangers of stereotyping, the nature and dangers of drug abuse, bullying, violence and issues associated with the environment. Pupils have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on a number of moral concerns in English, drama, geography and history and in sixth-form A-level economics and GNVQ courses. Good examples were observed in economics, when students were discussing the moral dimension of public expenditure on major capital projects such as the Dome and the space race. In geography the moral dilemmas associated with migration, for example Turkish people in Germany, are discussed as are issues associated with recycling. Appropriate emphasis is placed on sportsmanship and adherence to rules in physical education. In most classrooms pupils benefit from working in an orderly atmosphere with acceptable and predictable responses, rewards and sanctions.
39. As was the case at the time of the last report, provision for pupils' social development is very good. Staff support, encourage and value pupils' achievements. The quality of life and daily activity provide a caring and secure environment in which relationships are based on respect and co-operation. Pupils are given the opportunity to work collaboratively in lessons. Assemblies and the personal education programme also enable pupils to reflect and consider issues associated with relationships, the family and the media. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to show initiative and accept responsibility overall but they are more limited in the sixth form. These include membership of year councils and the school council, as librarians, peer counselling and participation in a wide range of school events. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last report. The 'Thorpe Olympiad' for more able pupils, involving mixed age teams from across the school, is an interesting and worthwhile initiative embracing both competitive and cooperative elements in the day's events.

An excellent range of extra-curricular activities and visits helps to cultivate social interaction. A significant amount of charitable fund-raising raises awareness of the needs of less fortunate members of society. In many lessons pupils are able to work in pairs and groups developing inter-relationship skills and self-confidence.

40. Provision to help pupils to develop an understanding of their own and other cultures is good. The school arranges a large number of visits to places of cultural interest and pupils are involved in musical and drama productions. Pupils are given opportunities to visit Ironbridge as in history as well as participating in visits to museums, theatres and art galleries. In English, pupils study literature from other cultures and times and are given many opportunities to develop their writing talents. In art and music opportunities are provided to study and reflect upon art and musical traditions from around the world and across time. The study of different countries and the way of life of their peoples in geography also contribute to raising cultural knowledge and awareness. In religious education pupils study the characteristics and importance of worship and sacred writings to different cultures. While the raising of awareness of life in a multicultural British and world society is highlighted in school policy, it is not yet fully appreciated by all departments and operated across the whole curriculum.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

41. Procedures for monitoring, assessing and supporting academic performance and personal development are good.
42. Procedures for child protection are good and staff are well briefed so as to be able to identify any possible areas of concern. Support for pupils' welfare is strong and plays a major part in promoting equality of opportunity. There is a very well integrated team of teachers and other staff who work successfully to ensure that pupils are well supported and that individual needs are not overlooked in a large school. Form tutors, year heads and their assistants and those with specialist functions such as the special educational needs coordinator, the admissions' officer, the careers' coordinator, and the pastoral care worker are well integrated into a team under the effective leadership of a senior manager. Staff know pupils and their families well and regular briefings keep all parties up-to-date. Pupils interviewed during the inspection expressed confidence in approaching staff to discuss any concerns. Allied to this there are good links with external agencies, for example to support a few pupils who refuse to attend school, and a very good careers programme operates in the school. Some GNVQ students, who have had to extend their studies beyond the normal period for the course, have benefited from the quality of support and encouragement provided, and have been rewarded with ultimate success.
43. Although there are good examples of the use of tutor time at the start of the day there are also missed opportunities to use that time productively to check on use of the 'Link' diaries and to monitor progress. Lunch-time is short and particularly rushed for those who also participate in extra-curricular activities.
44. Pupils transferring from primary schools are well supported both prior to starting at secondary school and in their induction in Year 7. Similarly induction into the sixth form is supportive. The weekly homework club is another notable initiative to support pupils and promote equality of opportunity. A project to identify and support the more able pupils in the school has had initial success but the effect of initiatives on their progress has not been assessed. All pupils have the chance of their efforts being noted and rewarded in class, including by the headteacher when he monitors teaching and learning in lessons. A picture gallery in the main reception area of those making notable progress recognises pupils across the full ability range.
45. Attendance is monitored closely and procedures are good. Procedures for monitoring good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are satisfactory and there is a positive behaviour policy which provides clear guidance. The majority of teachers apply the policy consistently which contributes to the good behaviour observed in most lessons but a minority do not. Procedures are not effective enough in dealing with some poor behaviour around the school and in enforcing the rules on school uniform at Key Stage 4. Incidents of oppressive behaviour are addressed, with the pastoral care worker having a major role in talking through incidents with perpetrators to stress the consequences of their actions. Most pupils and parents are happy with the way such issues are dealt with but a small minority feel that the school should do more to eliminate all bullying.

46. At whole school level there is very good use of assessment data from test and examination results to compare pupils' and students' achievements across subjects within the school and in comparison with national and local standards. There is an ongoing determination to raise standards and to use such information so that pupils can achieve their best. This has been taken to very good levels in Year 11 with the setting of individual targets for pupils. This good practice should be extended to other parts of the school in manageable stages. Reports to parents on pupils' progress should also relate comments to targets where relevant. The involvement of a large number of staff in the academic mentoring of such pupils is providing invaluable advice and support on such matters as revision, homework and coursework. Monitoring and support is mostly good in subject departments.
47. The use of assessment to guide curriculum planning is satisfactory overall but there are examples of very good practice. The establishment of very effective withdrawal classes for pupils with reading difficulties at Key Stage 3 was in direct response to deficiencies revealed by assessment and improvements are dramatic in improving reading ages. Assessment data is also at the heart of identifying the more able pupils in the school. There are plans to modifying the curriculum for those at Key Stage 4 who have been identified as finding the traditional curriculum difficult.
48. Good attention is paid to safety in lessons including within practical work. At the time of the inspection there were some potential hazards including holes in hard surfaced areas used by pupils and the haphazard stacking of equipment against sheds. Much attention has been given to the safe evacuation of premises in case of fire and practices take place regularly. Sufficient staff are trained in first-aid. Pupils with medical difficulties are well cared for and all relevant staff have been trained to meet specific needs of pupils. Administrative staff play an important role in supporting pupils and in taking the load off teachers where possible.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

49. The school makes a commitment in its aims to forge strong links with parents and reinforces this with a home-school contract issued in Year 7. It manages such links satisfactorily.
50. Parents' views of the school are mostly positive. The great majority feel that the school enables pupils to make good progress and that the school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. They recognise that the school is well led and managed and pupils become mature and responsible. The interesting range of activities outside lessons is applauded. The great majority also feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.
51. Of the 333 respondents to the pre-inspection questionnaire, significant minorities had concerns about the consistency and quality of homework and the information received on pupils' progress. Inspectors found better standards of homework during the inspection than suggested by some parents' comments and the use of homework in the sixth form was very good. There is sufficient concern however for the school to monitor this provision regularly and to devise better ways of informing parents what homework should be expected. The potential of the 'Link' diary in smoothing communications between school and home and involving parents in pupils' learning is not fully realised. There are too many gaps in pupils' entries on homework and parents' signatures are not always forthcoming.
52. Inspectors agree that more could be done to inform parents of pupils' progress and that an improvement in school reports would go some considerable way to addressing this issue. Some are very good, and more so in English than elsewhere, but most reports need to be less general and more subject specific, spelling out what pupils and students can and cannot do and always stating what needs to be done to improve further. The school has plans to provide more information to parents on the Key Stage 3 curriculum which should also help in promoting a greater degree of parental involvement.
53. The Parents' Booklet is informative and gives a clear picture of the school's results for the last three years in each subject giving a good overview of standards in the school and trends. This is a very good and an unusual feature. Newsletters are informative but there is no guarantee that they reach parents via pupil-post. Parents can check however as newsletters are numbered sequentially. There are a number of overtures made to parents by the school where the response is disappointing. Parents' consultation evenings are held for each year group

but in some year groups attendance is as low as 50 per cent. There is however very good attendance by parents of pupils with special educational needs at formal reviews of progress. Parents receive interim reports each year, and in Years 7 and 10 parents are invited to an autumn term open evening to find out how their child is settling in to Key Stages 3 and 4. Some special events put on for parents dealing with topics such as drug awareness have had a poor response. In contrast there is very good support and involvement of parents at musical and drama productions and they recognise and appreciate the high standards achieved. The English department issues some very good advice to parents to encourage them to help with pupils' literacy skills.

54. There are some very good links between the school and parents in dealing with pupils' welfare. The school also makes every attempt to involve parents in eliminating bullying. The school does not pretend that bullying does not take place, but as a part of its strategy encourages a two-way communication with parents stressing 'we want to know if anything is going on'. Most parents are satisfied with the results.
55. All parents are automatically members of the Thorpe St Andrew School Association which provides much support to the school. The association plays a particularly important role in raising funds which they manage entirely and receive bids from the school. Some parents have assisted with the much needed redecoration of parts of the school, but that is a mammoth task.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

56. The school is well led and managed and leadership has a clear vision for the future. Nearly all parents agree that the school is well led. Since the last inspection the school has moved on from a situation where it was underachieving and coasting in many ways to the current situation where results more accurately reflect what pupils should be achieving.
57. A very effective governing body plays a key part in shaping the direction of the school. Governors know the school well, can account for its performance and have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Both governors and senior managers are ambitious and realise that further improvements are possible and necessary. Some statutory requirements are not being met in relation to religious education and a daily act of collective worship.
58. The major challenge of creating a whole-school ethos on a split-site is an ongoing issue. It is helped considerably by the common philosophies and approaches of the senior management. Communications on a split-site could be improved with more widespread and imaginative use of ICT. Middle managers have been mostly effective in raising standards and in developing a team approach. Improvements could be made in development planning in art, and science operates too much as separate subjects rather than an integrated team. Formal meetings between senior management and middle management should be more regular to build on existing good links, to avoid excessive agendas, and to ensure that whole-school initiatives are being pushed through uniformly.
59. The school's motto 'Success for All' is central to its work. This is largely fulfilled but there are insufficient curricular opportunities for some lower attainers at Key Stage 4 pending the planned introduction of vocational programmes. The school's 'more able task group' has achieved much in its initial stages in focusing on the needs of the very highest attainers. Senior management should now consider mechanisms for taking this a stage further to assess the results of this very good initiative.
60. Very good use is made of data to measure the 'value added' by each subject to pupils' learning. It is used well in annual departmental reviews conducted by the headteacher to identify strengths and weaknesses, take action and review progress. Most staff and departments respond to the clear messages of such analyses.
61. Significant weaknesses in teaching at the last inspection have been largely eradicated. Most of the new staff who have been recruited to the school have helped in raising standards. Newly qualified teachers have benefited from very good induction programmes and there is now a better balance between long serving and more recently trained staff. Staffing is adequate overall but there are some split classes in English where pupils have more than one teacher which affects continuity. The current sharp focus by the headteacher on observing

teachers in the classroom is excellent practice. The headteacher's sixth-month secondment to another school, in response to a request from the local educational authority, has also been helpful to Thorpe St Andrew. It has enabled the headteacher to take a fresh look at the school on his return. The headteacher is quite rightly setting uniform standards before involving other senior managers in classroom assessment. It is now crucial that all middle managers too see rigorous and brave monitoring of teaching as part of their regular brief both to applaud good practice and take prompt action to rectify weaknesses. Delegation from the headteacher should strengthen this process and not dilute it. The formal appraisal of teachers is on hold but school plans show a readiness for its resurrection nationally.

62. The school's medium and long-term development plans are challenging and reflect appropriate priorities. Plans have relevant costings and timescales and are complemented by a good programme of in-service training. Making all staff proficient in ICT has been identified as one priority but there is already some good practice in the management of special education needs, compiling pupil databases and in timetabling. In bringing about change the school has had to cope with a tight budget and is incurring a current deficit of about two per cent. There are plans to eliminate this deficit by 2001 which is correct.
63. The school has improved standards whilst reducing the percentage of the budget spent on staffing which is now about average. Bringing such a large item of expenditure under control has allowed more to be spent on learning resources, but there is ground to be made up in replenishing stock in some areas. The decision to set up withdrawal classes for those with reading difficulties has inevitably meant that some support has been taken out of classrooms to staff this initiative. The decision has been justified by the great strides being made by pupils withdrawn, but it does leave classroom support very thin in some areas.
64. In assessing efficiency and effectiveness the school makes very good use of data to compare performance with other schools both locally and nationally and is acutely aware of standards which it should be achieving in test and examination results. Although it is not routinely systematic in applying 'best value' principles to all its spending such principles are nevertheless apparent in most areas. Although the school manages post-16 education so as not to be a drain on resources elsewhere there is not a regular analysis of this. Consultation before making major spending decisions is good and has been very good leading up to the bid for Sports College status. The school responds positively to recommendations following external audits on its systems and finances, but the last published audit prior to the inspection was in 1995 which diminishes its influence. A very recent audit has been carried out and a report is imminent but was not available at the time of the inspection.
65. The least successful area of the governors' action plan has been in improving accommodation but this is not for the want of trying with bids and other representations. Many areas are in need of refurbishment. Despite self-help programmes much of the school requires redecoration and looks very neglected in parts. Some departments such as English have invigorated teaching rooms and adjacent areas with attractive and stimulating displays, but too many other areas in the school are bleak and barren and there is too much graffiti. There are some untidy areas which the school has learned to live with. The amount of time spent by caretaking and cleaning staff in picking up litter is a waste of scarce resources. A more effective purge is necessary.
66. Governors have been both pragmatic and enterprising in taking steps to raise funds. A part-time development officer has been appointed who has already been extremely successful in raising funds to match the funding from Sports College status. There are other significant benefits which are already being realised through closer links with business and industry. The development officer has been fully embraced into the school and provides a refreshing new look at some very difficult funding issues which the school faces.
67. Governors have wisely delayed any possible restructuring of senior management following the promotion of a deputy head to the headship of another school. In the meantime a depleted senior management team has risen to the occasion. A committed administrative staff too have responded well in coping with the pressures caused by the absence of the school bursar. The recent news of the success of the high quality bid for Sports College status has helped to clarify matters with regard to the management structure. Any new structure should aim at strengthening existing links between middle and senior managers and ensuring that middle managers are encouraged and enabled to fulfil their key role in bringing about further change and progress.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. To raise standards further the governors and senior management should:

(i) Improve GCSE results in modern foreign languages particularly boys' results in French by:

- maintaining the current improvements in teaching;
- involving pupils and parents more fully in setting targets for improvement.

(paragraphs 4, 140, 146)

(ii) Add further breadth to the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form by:

- implementing current school plans to introduce vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and a comprehensive programme of key skills in the sixth-form.

(paragraphs 28, 175)

(iii) Improve accommodation by:

- continuing to press for external funding;
- maintaining higher standards of good housekeeping and maintenance;
- encouraging pupils to take a greater pride in property and the school environment;
- using displays more effectively in rooms and corridors to help enliven the school and match the excellent practice in some areas.

(paragraphs 65, 91, 108, 112, 119, 153, 160, 166, 178)

(iv) Extend the frequency of classroom observations of teaching and learning by:

- building on the current effective monitoring of lessons by the headteacher;
- involving senior managers in this process;
- all middle managers regularly monitoring teachers in their area of responsibility;
- taking prompt action to rectify weaknesses in teaching.

(paragraph 61)

(v) Extend the use of target setting by:

- learning from the current good practice currently operating in Year 11;
- incorporating more into assessment and marking procedures making it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve further.

(paragraphs 24, 46, 126, 133, 145, 160, 178)

(vi) Improve the quality of school reports by:

- making reports more subject specific;
- relating comments to individual targets where relevant;
- making it clear what pupils can and cannot do and what needs to be done to improve further.

(paragraphs 46, 52)

(vii) Meet statutory requirements fully at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in relation to religious education and in relation to a daily act of collective worship.

(paragraphs 29, 30, 57, 165)

In addition to the key issues above the less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan: measures to address the recent downward trend in results in A-level chemistry and biology and in securing greater consistency for lower attainers at Key Stage 3 (paragraphs 2, 22, 102, 104, 108); the greater use of information and communication technology in subjects across the curriculum and the recording of that information centrally (paragraphs 10, 25, 27, 28, 86, 133, 136, 137, 138, 139); current weaknesses observed in the teaching of business studies at GCSE (paragraphs 22, 170).

## OTHER FEATURES OF THE SCHOOL

### COMMUNITY LINKS

69. The school has good links with the local community. The adult education unit based at the school fosters such links through a wide range of evening and weekend courses and activities. Activities are also arranged in holiday periods including involvement with play schemes. The school playing fields and swimming pool are used extensively by the community throughout the year. The successful bid for Sports College status should extend community links. There are good links with other educational establishments helping in the transfer between stages.
70. The department of physical education has numerous links which help in broadening the curriculum, extending the skills and encouraging pupils to see participation in leisure and sport as a life-long process. Such links allow the use of additional premises and facilities including astro-turf pitches, a fitness suite, squash and badminton courts, an indoor tennis court, an athletics track and the use of conference facilities. Links with a ski club broaden opportunities further. A very good feature of sporting and leisure links is the practice of allowing local organisations to have notice-board space in the physical education area. Records are available of the numbers of pupils who join local clubs including a breakdown of boys and girls. A football club attracted over 100 pupils in 1998-9 and an arctic and mountain venture club over 200. Other clubs recruiting pupils include those offering swimming, athletics, hockey, cricket and basketball. In turn the school provides tuition on a vocational course in the sixth form for a small number of recruits from the major local football team, under the sponsorship of the Football Association. The use of outside facilities is particularly helpful in the assessment of students on the A-level course and in helping in the preparation for school visits in Britain and other countries.
71. The industrial mentoring programme operating with some pupils at Key Stage 4 brings an additional slant to pupils' programmes and is well managed. Observation of a session during the week of the inspection showed that pupils were gaining in confidence through discussions with a mentor from a large local company and they welcomed the additional challenges presented. Other external personnel are used to provide additional support for pupils and the contribution to pupils' welfare and guidance is particularly important.
72. The work experience programme in Year 11 and links forged through vocational programmes in the sixth form help pupils and students both in their studies and career choices, although A-level students are less involved. A range of employers and representatives of educational institutions contribute to the careers advice available and some employers are constructively involved in mock interviews.
73. The school has a good reputation in the community for its music and drama performances. This is further strengthened by inviting experts into the school to give talks and performances, for example the band of the Royal Air Force. Such special events are well used to encourage pupils to develop existing interests or to start seriously.
74. Some problems which have occurred with local residents connected with parking and the behaviour of some pupils have been tackled constructively and neighbours now often act as the 'eyes and ears of the school'.
75. The school recognises that there are further opportunities to be gained from the greater integration of adult education into the curriculum. The appointment of a part-time development officer is also broadening horizons and an understanding of what can be achieved. The need to raise funding to match that provided externally by Sports College status has not only been successful in financial terms, with over £100,000 raised, but has also strengthened some existing links and forged new ones. There are already important feelers going out to set up further partnerships with companies attracted to a new local business park near to the school. The quality of such approaches is also based on a refreshing realisation that the school must be in a position to offer companies something constructive in return for their support.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	257
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	62

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4.3	29.2	36.6	25.7	3.1	1.1	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1337	246
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	119	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	153	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	128	133	261

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	106	104
	Girls	106	86	75
	Total	201	192	179
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 [69]	74 [74]	69 [69]
	National	64 [65]	62 [60]	54 [56]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 [38]	50 [50]	30 [31]
	National	28 [35]	38 [36]	23 [27]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	108	100
	Girls	86	93	90
	Total	159	201	190
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 [57]	77 [79]	73 [76]
	National	64 [61]	64 [64]	59 [61]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 [41]	52 [55]	37 [26]
	National	31 [30]	37 [37]	28 [30]

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	99	121	220

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	51	94	97
	Girls	72	115	121
	Total	123	209	218
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 [51]	95 [94]	99 [96]
	National	46.3 [44.6]	90.7 [90]	95 [95]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.1 [39.8]
	National	37.8 [36.8]

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	0
	National		

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	39	30	69

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	15.3	17.8	16.3 [18.9]	3.5		3.5 [1.0]
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 [17.6]	2.7		2.8 [2.8]

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	41	65.8
	National		n/a

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	0
	National		

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	9
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	1490
Any other minority ethnic group	1

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	52	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	91.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7-13**

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	494

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7-13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7-11**

Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	22.1

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1998/9
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	£
Total income	3,323,416
Total expenditure	3,339,694
Expenditure per pupil	2,214
Balance brought forward from previous year	-33,950
Balance carried forward to next year	-50,228

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1583
Number of questionnaires returned	333

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	55	8	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	52	7	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	66	7	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	55	17	6	3
The teaching is good.	25	61	5	2	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	48	20	8	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	50	8	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	45	4	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	25	48	18	4	6
The school is well led and managed.	43	47	4	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	55	5	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	44	5	1	10

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

### **ENGLISH**

76. In 1999, results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were above the national average compared with all schools and average compared with similar schools. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, results were well above average compared with all schools. In 1999 results were well above average in the percentage achieving the levels expected of fourteen-year-olds (Level 5 or above) and above average at the higher levels (Level 6 or above).
77. In 1999 results at GCSE grades A\*-C were well above average in both English and English literature though the proportion of the year group entered for English literature was below average. The relative performance of pupils in English in particular was significantly better than the same pupils achieved in their other subjects in 1999. There has been an upward trend in results over the last three years.
78. Results at A-Level in 1999 in English literature were well above average for grades A-E and A-B and above average in English language, as they have been consistently in recent years.
79. Inspection evidence confirms the longer term trends in English results and current attainment at the end of each key stage is well above average. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and each other with good understanding. At all levels of attainment most speak confidently. Most can draw upon wide vocabularies, and more than is usual for their age make effective use of technical language. These qualities are developed and enriched through opportunities to explore ideas and gain good understanding of the texts they read when working in groups. Among many good examples observed, a class of lower attaining pupils in Year 8 assumed the identities of characters in the text being read and successfully improvised answers to questions asked by classmates about their character's thoughts and actions. Higher attainers are able to discuss in depth features of texts being studied and increasingly demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve their effects. This was strikingly obvious in a Year 10 class considering differences of technique and content of the work in two poets writing about old age. The development of these skills, begun in Year 7, is well established at the end of Key Stage 3 and represents a major strength of pupils' work at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
80. Attainment in reading is good. Most pupils read with good understanding and an above average proportion recognise significant detail and implication. They are able to reach judgements supported by evidence from the text. Those with poor reading skills on entry develop an ability to read well enough to understand at least the main sense of a text, but a significant minority depend upon teachers' guidance to gain more than a superficial understanding. Writing skills are well above average. Most write appropriately for a range of purposes and are able to organise material effectively when writing at length.
81. Creative writing in both verse and prose is a strength which is illustrated by successes in national competitions organised for example by the Roald Dahl foundation. Most pupils present their work with care but across the whole-school curriculum that can vary depending on the demands of the subject teacher. They benefit from structured teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling, but the quality of writing of pupils of average attainment is too often reduced by the frequency of errors, particularly in spelling which was also noted in the last inspection report. Such errors relate to words in common use and in some cases are linked to features of local speech.
82. At Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form, strengths are extended to meet the increased challenge of course requirements and the expectations of teachers and the pupils themselves. Lower attaining pupils however continue to need significant support from teachers, or each other, to gain satisfactory understanding when reading and in organising their writing. Some errors in writing, although reduced, persist from earlier years despite the efforts of teachers. Exceptionally high levels of skill, knowledge and understanding for their age and experience were observed in lessons for higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 working on challenging texts, for example when Year 11 pupils compared modern love poetry with poems from the past. These pupils and students in the sixth form are confident and capable when exploring

texts in depth. They develop good skills of critical analysis and use technical terms to express their understanding. Very good levels of discussion were evident in a sixth-form group considering the language and characters of Harold Pinter. The development of pupils' skills in English is increasingly well-supported in lessons of other subjects.

83. The recently introduced whole school policy for improving literacy is beneficial to pupils. This is evident in the wide provision of opportunities for discussion, for responding at length in both speech and writing, and in making effective notes. Most teachers take care to ensure that pupils understand, use and correctly spell the language appropriate to their subjects. Some provide good advice on how to organise written work. In a Year 11 class in English a challenging spelling test at the beginning of the lesson was well used before moving swiftly on to the main objectives of the lesson. Development of pupils' skills of speaking and writing is well supported by their experience of drama, but development of other skills specific to drama is restricted at Key Stage 3 by there being comparatively too few lessons in the subject.
84. The quality of teaching and learning in English is good overall. Often it is very good and only very rarely is it less than satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge and expertise. They link lessons to previous and future work and ensure that pupils understand the tasks set for them. They have high expectations of effort, behaviour and attainment at all levels of ability and a good understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses. Lessons are well constructed so that pupils can practise and develop their skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing and are conducted at a brisk pace, often with fixed time limits for the completion of the components. The best teaching is characterised by the skilful use of questions both to confirm and extend understanding. Teachers do not accept superficial answers if more is possible. Less successful lessons result from misbehaviour, usually by a small minority of pupils, or rarely from teachers either underestimating or overestimating pupils' capabilities so that they are inappropriately challenged.
85. The quality of relationships between pupils and teachers and pupils with each other is almost entirely good, so that learning is effective and progress is good. Confidence in relationships encourages pupils to work towards understanding of complex issues by offering suggestions and exploring ideas with sensitivity, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, as seen in a discussion on euthanasia with a Year 11 class. Pupils at all levels of attainment are well-motivated and respond positively to challenging work and praise. At the inspection attitudes to learning were very good and sometimes excellent in one of every three lessons observed. Excellence was noted in classes of high attainers at Key Stage 4 and in groups withdrawn for basic skills work in Year 8. Pupils sustain effort and concentration. Lower attaining pupils are proud of their successes and the talented and gifted are freed from possible inhibition because other pupils respect their work. Pupils nearly always collaborate effectively in pairs, in groups and in a full class. Especially at Key Stage 3, the quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs is increased by the very good work of learning support assistants.
86. Since the time of the previous inspection, the balance of specialist and non-specialist teaching and the time available for teaching in Years 8 and 11 have been improved. Much has been done to improve the accuracy of spelling but weaknesses persist. The department does not make a planned contribution to the development of pupils' skills in ICT, but does provide opportunities for practice in word processing and desk-top publishing, and in the use of the internet. The allocation of time for drama is inadequate to support the development of skills. Too many English classes at Key Stage 3 are taught by more than one teacher which affects the continuity of teaching. The department has very good and visionary management which provides effective, firm yet supportive leadership for a capable and hard-working team of teachers for the benefit of pupils' learning.

## **DRAMA**

87. Drama is taught as an integral part of English at Key Stage 3 and as a subject in its own right at Key Stage 4. Studies can be extended at A-level in the theatre studies course. GCSE results at grades A\*-C were slightly above the national average in each of the last two years and in 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving A\*/A grades was well above average. Although A-level results are well above the national average the number of candidates is too small to make meaningful comparisons.
88. Current overall standards in Year 11 at the end of Key Stage 4 reflect GCSE results and are just above average. Pupils improvise thoughtfully in groups with a good focus on their own

performances and for the group as a whole. Written work varies from below expectation to well above, according to the analytical and literacy skills of the different individual students, but most is at the level expected for their age. In the sixth form the quality of acting skills is good. Their application of theory to practice is particularly impressive. In a Year 13 lesson pupils drew well both on their studies of practitioners and on techniques observed in professional productions, discussing whether Brecht's style would be appropriate for exploring an improvisation based on a modern poem about street crime. They then used stylised movements like those they had seen in a performance of 'East' to portray the shattering of a plate glass window.

89. Teaching in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is always at least good and the majority is very good or excellent. Teaching is characterised by lively lessons, well planned and briskly paced. Pupils arrive in Key Stage 4 with limited acting skills, but there is an appropriate early focus on raising the standards through activities such as mime, monologues, different approaches to exploring aspects of character, and developing extended group improvisations. For example a Year 10 group considered different ways to present the life story of the main character in a poem about homelessness. Individual targets set for GCSE candidates are thoughtful, well-focused, encouraging and grade-linked, so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Sixth-form students extend their acting skills and also explore interpretations of text and production methodology. This enables them to link together the various parts of the course and develop source material for their final coursework. Teachers provide much thoughtful help and prompting to enable students to identify and meet examination criteria. Reflective questioning by teachers promotes equally thoughtful responses. Students show initiative in exploring dramatic stimuli and in persevering to improve their work. Year 13 students are particularly keen and confident and happy to present their work. They discuss projects in a friendly manner with each other and with their teachers, developing good quality negotiation skills, for example in discussing the best way to present a dialogue. Occasionally lesson planning is over-ambitious, leading to rather rushed conclusions at the end of lessons. Marking is helpfully done to examination criteria, but does not consistently give points for improvement and comments are not always easy to read.
90. Trips to theatre productions broaden students' horizons, and they are given ample opportunities for performance and technical work in school productions. Main school plays and musicals are chosen to encourage boys' involvement as well as that of girls' and there is enthusiastic participation by many who value theatrical arts as a leisure interest. The drama curriculum makes good contributions to students' moral and cultural development, and a very strong contribution to their social development through careful consideration of many social issues such as the problems of violence in society.
91. Procedures for the induction of new staff are supportive and effective, leading for example to relevant professional training for the school's current A-level syllabus. The modest studio is of good quality and well-equipped, but rather small for the current numbers and the main costume storage is on the other main site, some 300 metres away, which inhibits access to these resources. The subject is gaining in popularity, with increasing numbers in GCSE helped considerably by the subject being timetabled against three different options, and numbers are also rising at A-level.

## **MATHEMATICS**

92. In 1999, and taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above average compared with all schools and the best of the core subjects. In 1999, results were also well above average compared with similar schools. In 1999 results were above average in the percentage achieving the levels expected of fourteen-year-olds (Level 5 or above) and well above average at the higher levels (Level 6 or above).
93. In 1999, GCSE results were well above the national average at grades A\*-C and are beginning to reflect what pupils should be achieving compared with their Key Stage 3 results. At A-level in the last three years results have been above average at grades A-E and A-B. The number of students taking A-level mathematics has increased significantly since the last inspection with a cohort of some 20 pupils in each of the last four years.
94. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is above average but nevertheless results in mathematics in

National Curriculum tests reflect the good progress made throughout Key Stage 3. Current standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are also well above average. There is a strong emphasis on number skills with and without use of a calculator and pupils begin to collect and explain data. In a Year 7 class of above average ability, pupils could create a tally chart and could define and calculate the mean, mode and median as measures of average. There is good development of algebraic concepts in Year 8 and by Year 9 most pupils can handle algebraic expressions and equations and the more able can solve equations by more than one method. Provision for pupils with below average ability and for those with special educational needs is good and with effective in-class support in many lessons these students also make good progress.

95. Standards are above average in the current Year 11 group at the end of Key Stage 4. There is a continuing promotion of numeracy throughout this key stage with some very effective use of number games and puzzles used to start or finish a lesson. Expectations of well presented work are made clear to pupils and a lesson on rotation, reflection and enlargement in Year 10 resulted in some very carefully drawn and measured diagrams. Investigative work of a high standard underpins the whole curriculum and by Year 11 the systematic approach to problem solving, looking for patterns and generating hypotheses is well developed. Some very good investigative work, looking at the seating capacity of different table arrangements, was seen in two middle ability Year 11 classes with pupils writing well and at considerable length about their investigations and their conclusions. Most pupils, and particularly those of lower ability, make good progress and in 1999 only three of the 209 pupils failed to achieve at least a grade A\*-G in their GCSE mathematics examinations.
96. Standards are well above average in the sixth form. Progress in the sixth form is good helped by the modular A-level curriculum which provides for a flexible programme of study allowing students the options of pure mathematics with statistics or mechanics, further mathematics or A/S-level mathematics. Work of a high standard was seen in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students are clearly motivated by achievement in earlier modules and gain in confidence as they progress. A lot of good confident work was seen, but a minority of students are less confident despite the quality of their work suggesting otherwise.
97. The quality of teaching is predominantly very good and is never less than satisfactory. Teachers adopt a range of strategies to support learning and these are most effective in the lessons where teaching is of the highest standards. In a Year 8 algebra lesson, collecting like terms was very well illustrated by pupils forming groups according to the symbol card they had been given, and then describing the class in terms of these groups. In a Year 7 lesson, weighing and measuring a range of everyday objects gave pupils a good appreciation of metric units. In all lessons classroom management is good and potential difficult behaviour is handled effectively to avoid disruption. Lessons where the teaching was satisfactory or good shared many of the features of the best lessons. However, over-ambitious tasks for pupils' abilities, too generous an allocation of time for example work, and the need to provide significant individual support for some pupils, resulted in early pace and challenge not being kept up throughout lessons in a minority of cases. Most classes however are well organised and well managed and a variety of activities ensure that the time is well used. During the inspection the quality of teaching in lessons was better in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth-form than in Key Stage 4, but Year 11 lessons were predominantly devoted to completing assessed coursework. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and teach with confidence and humour. Relationships with pupils are good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Relationships with students in the sixth form are very good where there is a combination of high expectation and intellectual challenge in a supportive environment. Teachers have good knowledge of pupils with special educational needs and learning support assistants provide effective in-class support.
98. The department is well organised and well managed and teachers work well as a team. General resources are satisfactory, but there is inadequate ICT to support teaching in the classroom, and access to computer rooms for whole-class activities is limited. With the larger groups some mathematics classrooms are cramped and in spite of good wall displays these environments do little to lift the spirit or celebrate the work in mathematics.
99. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching has improved significantly. Homework is now set and marked regularly for all ability groups and there is effective assessment and

monitoring of students' achievement. Good use is being made of this data for target setting and predicting GCSE grades in Key Stage 4. The department has developed the foundation tier of the curriculum in Key Stage 3 and is continuing to increase the resources for this work. There is now a good match of work to all ability levels in Years 7 and 8. The number of students studying mathematics at A-level has increased and this work is a strength of the department.

100. The emphasis on number work in the mathematics department has resulted in a good level of numeracy in the school and most students can work without calculators to a considerable extent. Although the school does not have a cross-curricular numeracy policy there is evidence of the range of these skills in other subject areas where most students can use simple graphs, bar charts and pie charts to illustrate data. At Key Stages 3 and 4 mathematics is an integral part of science and pupils can manipulate formulae and find the line of best fit for a graph. In technology pupils can measure and weigh accurately and use simple geometric concepts to design in three dimensions and to find the centre of a panel. In geography such skills are seen in the interpretation of grid references and the measurement of scale and bearing in map reading. In physical education students measure pulse rates in swimming and can present and interpret graphs of this data. In the sixth form there is work in science requiring the understanding of complex formulae and calculations, but students who are not studying mathematics at A-level find that demanding. There is extensive analysis and interpretation of data in geography. In psychology correlation methods are used in estimating the reliability and validity of data, and scatter graphs are profitably used in survey methods.

## SCIENCE

101. In 1999, results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above average compared with all schools and taking the four years 1996 to 1999 results were average. In 1999 results were well above average in the percentage achieving the levels expected of fourteen-year-olds (Level 5 or above) and above average at the higher levels (Level 6 or above). In comparison with similar schools, results were average in 1999.
102. In GCSE, the percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in the double science award, was well above average in 1999 and similar to the previous year. Results in 1999 at A\*/A grades were above average with girls noticeably outperforming boys at these top grades. In the double science examination pupils scored highest in physics followed closely by biology. The results in chemistry were far lower. The overall success rate for those entered for double science has been helped by the policy of entering lower attainers for the single science examination at GCSE. Whereas standards in double science have improved considerably since the last inspection, those for single science have not. The results of pupils entered for single science have been poor even compared with the low success rates nationally and in 1999 they were well below average at grades A\*-C and below average at grades A\*-G. In 1999 the relative performance of pupils in single science was significantly lower than the same pupils achieved in their other subjects.
103. At A-level the best results have been in physics. In each of the last three years all candidates in physics have been successful at grades A-E, and results were above average at grades A-B in 1999. Results in 1999 were below average in biology and well below in chemistry, and not as good as the results of some recent years in these subjects. In 1997 they were above average in both subjects and average in chemistry in 1998.
104. Current standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 3. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are well above average in double science but well below in single science. Within these overall judgements there are variations across Key Stages 3 and 4 particularly in lower sets where some standards are not high enough. In the sixth form standards are above average in physics, broadly in line with national averages in biology and below average in chemistry. Where there are variations within subjects they are linked directly to the quality of teaching. For example pupils in lower sets reach better standards than expected when teachers have high expectations of their capabilities and plan stimulating lessons. Pupils in a lower set in Year 9, in learning more about sound, quickly recognised longitudinal and horizontal waves, as a direct result of the teacher's high expectations of pupils' potential to identify and explain different wave patterns in a long 'slinky' coil of wire. In contrast, some higher and lower attaining pupils achieve lower standards than expected as a result of

weaknesses in teacher's planning and knowing how to monitor what individual pupils really understand. Pupils could not for example clearly grasp links between an experiment and a lesson's topic because theory and practical work had been planned separately, not constantly meshed together in explanations.

105. Overall, pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical and life processes, living things and materials are better than their ability to explore these ideas by investigation. Year 9 pupils, know that metals react with acids to form another substance. Higher attaining pupils use symbols and formulae to summarise what happens and lower attaining pupils can write a word equation. Pupils in Year 11 support their ideas about the active transfer of substances through membranes using appropriate evidence from practical work about the passage of water through potato cells. Sixth-form students successfully tackle the complexities of harmonic motion, but in biology and chemistry have to rely too much on teacher guidance in assessing the viability and motility of boar semen and in understanding the structures of polymers. Opportunities for pupils to understand experimental method have improved since the last inspection and by the end of Year 9 pupils carry out structured experiments accurately with understanding of fair testing. At the end of Year 11, the highest attainers identify sources of error and extend their conclusions from closer examination of results, but middle and lower attainers at this key stage can only do so with the support of their teachers. Analysis of work shows that highest attainers record investigations to a very good standard but that the majority of pupils need to increase the sophistication of observations, make deeper analyses of results and raise the standard of evaluations in class work. Skills of planning are developing well but those of prediction need more emphasis especially at the beginning of Key Stage 3. Higher attainers can quickly interpret results and draw conclusions but the majority of pupils have more difficulty in using their own knowledge of science ideas and research to explain them. Standards of handwriting and the presentation of notes are variable and generally do not match expected standards. There are inconsistencies in the presentation of annotated two-dimensional diagrams.
106. The overall quality of teaching is good at all stages with notable examples of very good and excellent teaching. This enables the quality of learning to be good for most pupils despite some inconsistencies within sets. Pupils with special educational needs learn at a similar rate to other pupils because of good support from teachers, who know these pupils in their classes. The amount of support available from support assistants is limited, but of good quality. Teaching is only unsatisfactory in a small proportion of lessons but there are some weak features in other lessons. For example although pupils are placed into sets, teaching tends to be pitched at middle and lower attainers rather than higher attainers. Marking is too inconsistent but the marking of coursework investigations is better than that of classwork as good advice is given on how to improve. Nevertheless there is some very diligent and helpful marking as seen with a Year 8 class where all work was scrupulously marked both for science content and spelling errors. Teaching in the sixth form ranges from excellent to satisfactory, with the quality of learning varying between subjects.
107. Teachers have very good understanding of the information they need to teach and practical activities are skilfully and safely planned with help from good quality technician support. Where teaching is very good it makes the learning of science memorable. At the very beginning of one lesson, the imagination of a Year 8 class was quickly captured by a bucket of 'blood' which demonstrated the quantity in their body. The teacher continued to grip their attention by gruesome stories of 'Dracula' and then speedily moved through a variety of interesting activities. They enthusiastically shared ideas as they learnt about blood cells and sickle cell anaemia and were in no doubt about the purpose of blood. The best teaching makes work demanding yet interesting and relevant by using several different resources to explain an idea, and interesting experiments and fascinating demonstrations. Low attaining pupils in Year 11 know about satellites, and gained in understanding of propulsion systems and how rockets to get into orbit, through watching a 'water rocket' being launched. Ideas were reinforced using a trolley driven by a gas cartridge around a retort stand and very good planning and management of six different activities made complicated ideas understandable. In a sixth-form physics lesson a teacher's quiet but sharp humour kept pupils on task and many were rightly praised and encouraged to learn in a happy atmosphere. In contrast, in a biology lesson in Key Stage 4, pupils were lethargic where the pace of teaching was slow and not stimulating and where pupils were not given enough opportunities to enquire more deeply into the lesson topic. Homework is regularly used set to extend learning in the sixth form and there are some very good examples of good practice in physics, but overall it is not sufficiently well organised or imaginative enough at Key Stages 3 and 4.

108. In seeking improvement, further work is required in relation to standards in A-level biology and chemistry to address the recent downward trend in results, and in securing greater consistency for lower attainers at Key Stage 3. The integration of investigative science and information and communication technology needs clarifying in all schemes of work. The procedures for monitoring teaching and learning and sharing good practice are not rigorously implemented. The department also needs to operate more as an integrated science team and not as separate subjects. Little progress has been made on the recommendations in the last report about the accommodation, and it still requires 'substantial refurbishment to improve the learning environment'. Most rooms are grubby and in poor decorative order and with no coat hooks, although a few are improved by current displays. Laboratories are still scattered between two sites which creates substantial problems in resourcing lessons and team work.

## ART

109. GCSE results at grades A\*-C in 1999 and in the two previous years were well above average. Both girls and boys achieve well above average results and boys achieved significantly higher results than is usual for boys nationally. In 1999 results were also well above average at grades A\*/A mainly as a result of A grades and improved further on the above average results of the previous year. At A-level all candidates were successful in 1999 and 1997 at grades A-E and nearly all in 1998. At the higher grades A-B results were above average in 1999 and average in each of the two previous years. In 1999 three out of the eight candidates achieved the top A grade. GCSE and A-level results represent a consistent improvement on the already above average results noted at the last inspection.
110. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are currently achieving at least in line with national standards, and the majority are achieving above. At the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form standards are well above average. During Key Stage 3 pupils are acquiring a growing knowledge and understanding of art and its many elements, including specialist language and terminology and a very comprehensive range of skills and techniques in a wide range of media, including paint, pastels and clay which they use with increasing confidence and understanding. Pupils demonstrate a very good balance between imaginative and technical skills and draw with accuracy, sensitivity and purpose. The critical and historical element of the curriculum is now very well developed and is an integral part of the pupils' responses in various contexts. Pupils use the works of an extensive range of artists, including Cézanne, Sickert, Monet and a variety of cultures including Egyptian and African as a stimulus or starting point. This is in evidence at all stages and especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and is reinforced by visits to galleries and museums, adding a strong cultural and spiritual dimension to the art curriculum. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and students in the sixth form benefit greatly from the rich variety of experiences and expertise gained in their Key Stage 3 course. They continue to develop well and produce a range of outcomes with variety and scale of very high quality as seen in Years 12 and 13 in portrait work and in large paintings of figures. A-level pupils have good research skills and well-developed personal styles and use oils in landscape painting to show depth and atmosphere through careful and considered use of tones to give a realistic three-dimensional look to folds in clothing. Pupils with learning difficulties are very well supported by the art staff and they produce some quality outcomes.
111. The quality of teaching is mostly very good at all stages. This represents improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is a major strength of the department, very much influencing the quality of learning and very high standards of achievement. A good command of subject knowledge, effective lesson planning and good use of visual examples by teachers enables Year 7 pupils to understand colour relationships and formal and non-formal pattern effects and make great strides in acquisition of skills and knowledge. Stimulating dialogue and high quality individual pupil support during lessons, for example with help with colour mixing skills, contributes to pupils working with increasing confidence and imagination producing quality composite patterns. Year 9 pupils can represent with some precision and use tone, shape and line with feelings for the objects being drawn following high quality discussion and questions by the teacher. High expectations, challenging tasks and good use of time by staff enables pupils to sustain concentration, apply creative effort and work productively. The enthusiastic approach and effective teaching styles in a supportive atmosphere contribute to pupils' enjoyment, good behaviour and motivation, and increasing confidence in visual decision making. Results at GCSE are very much influenced by the high quality of individual support

and guidance which allows pupils to reach their full potential. A-level students work with a high level of maturity and independence and as at other stages take advantage of opportunities promoted by teachers to reflect on how colour, tone and texture convey moods, feelings and create atmosphere in their paintings.

112. The department is well managed on a day to day basis, but lacks strategic long-term planning, for example the department development plan is weak and does not identify clear priority targets, responsibilities and costings to take the department forward. The lack of focused regular meetings does not help the department to move forward collectively, for example in the quality of ongoing assessment within projects at Key Stage 3. Accommodation although adequate in size is in poor condition in terms of decoration and furniture. Resources are only adequate to sustain but not develop the curriculum. The department makes great efforts to provide a stimulating environment with displays of high quality which rewards and values pupils' achievements. Some general parts of the school are enlivened by bold and colourful work of pupils, particularly the reception area of one site. This could be profitably extended to other areas.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

113. Overall GCSE results are broadly in line with national averages but vary from one subject to another within the broad programme of design and technology. The best results in recent years have been in textiles where they are well above the national average at grades A\*-C. In 1999 results in food technology were similarly high. In resistant materials, results at grades A\*-C were just below average in 1999 and above average in 1998. In graphics, results were below average in 1999 and 1998, with boys well below average but girls broadly average. There have been few A\* grades in recent years in any of the design and technology subjects. Predominantly lower attaining pupils have been entered for automotive studies and catering and most were successful at grades A\*-G in 1999, but few at the higher grades A\*-C. A-level results have varied widely over time, and entry numbers have been too small to judge any significant trends.
114. Standards overall meet the national expectation at both Key Stages 3 and 4. They are not as high as the National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 which indicate well above average standards. The level statements against which the pupils' performance is assessed do not adequately match the National Curriculum levels of attainment and thereby inflate results. Across both key stages, pupils show confidence and competence in the use of tools and equipment, and make products well. They are helped in this by ready access to a very good range of well-maintained tools and machines, and very effective support from technicians. Pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory and allow them to measure and mark materials with some accuracy. Drawing skills are very good, and pupils can use a range of drawing techniques with confidence to construct plans and to communicate ideas. Designing skills do show some weaknesses. Food and textiles design folders in particular show that pupils are introduced to a range of techniques to help them generate designs and evaluate products and processes from early on in Key Stage 3, but in most other areas actual research and development of ideas by pupils is rather narrow in approach and evaluations of products against specifications are of limited depth. By Key Stage 4, these limitations place particular constraints on the standards of work of boys in particular, especially in the resistant materials and automotive studies options where boys are in the majority. The development of ideas is good in GCSE graphics as it is at A-level. In the sixth form, in both home economics and design and communication, students draw on good knowledge, understanding and skill to carry out detailed investigations into problems and offer well researched and well-presented solutions, and achieve good standards.
115. Teaching and learning are good across both key stages and at A-level. As a result of mutual classroom observations teachers have exchanged ideas on best practice. A key strength to emerge from this is the setting of very precise and tangible objectives for each lesson as well as for the end of each module of work. This approach stimulates good pace and challenge in many of the lessons seen at both key stages. Lesson structure is further improved by good, clear introductions at the start and concluding remarks which draw on the lesson's activities to broaden the discussion of technological issues. In resistant materials in Year 10, in a concluding talk on lamination after a practical session, pupils successfully moved into discussion of Scandinavian furniture development. In a Year 7 textiles lesson pupils, through adding to a list of key words, were able to move past simple definitions to discuss materials

and processes in some depth. A Year 7 class in food technology involved in the design and making of a sandwich had discussions well built into the lesson to evaluate end products. This was finally reinforced with a professional video on sandwich making to reinforce points.

116. In most cases the practical tasks set are very engaging and teachers plan the use of resources well. A Year 8 lesson began with pupils using drawing boards and grid paper to make very accurate isometric drawings and moved on to allow pupils to complete the making of ornate hammers in wood and metal using lathes, drills, and other equipment. GCSE pupils in food technology proceeded smoothly through a bread making exercise, both as a result of their own motivation and the pleasant but equally positive organisational skills of the teacher. At A-level, students are profitably encouraged to use the telephone and e-mail to contact clients and sources. Homework is often well planned to extend work done in the workshop or kitchen and a Year 8 class profitably researched lid designs for a box for their hammers. Pupils respond well and listen carefully to briefings enabling them to apply themselves to their tasks with a real determination to meet the objectives set. Progress is helped by working well together and offering constructive practical help. As a result of being prepared to turn up early with the teacher and sacrifice part of their morning break, pupils in a GCSE food technology class were able to extend a one hour lesson to ensure completion of a task.
117. Pupils of all levels of attainment, and those with special educational needs, make good progress in practical sessions, though exhortations to update plans or develop designs in some lessons meet with a less enthusiastic response, especially from boys. Pupils give insufficient attention to the development of their design ideas and tend to be uncritical in their approach; they rely heavily on teacher guidance through worksheets and copying from the board or the book. In a very small number of unsatisfactory lessons, pupils were relying solely on copied material where most had little knowledge or understanding of the topic under consideration, and as a result they worked slowly and with some disenchantment.
118. Since the last inspection there has been a very significant improvement in drawing skills which are now very good, and an improvement in standards of work in the sixth form. There has been a general improvement in teaching resulting in good standards in most aspects of the subject. Where unsatisfactory teaching occurs it continues to be because materials and methods insufficiently meets the needs of all pupils.
119. The wide ranging provision of design and technology is well led and well organised, with good management of resources and positive results emerging from exercises to share good practice between teachers across the subject. The length of Key Stage 3 modules of work, especially in Year 9, does not always offer sufficient time for pupils to secure their knowledge and understanding and develop their designs. Accommodation in the textiles is insufficient for wet work such as dyeing and for storage and drying of materials and conditions are cramped. Similarly food technology rooms suffer from dilapidated and badly furnished accommodation. The department is also responsible for child development, where results have been well above average, and consistently much higher than the results achieved by the same pupils in their other GCSE subjects in the school.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

120. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\*-C was above the national average in 1999 and in 1998 was well above. This represents an improvement on the below average results of 1997 and on the results at the time of the last inspection. In 1999, results at grades A\*/A were in line with the national average. At A-level results at grades A-E were below average in 1999, but all students were successful at these grades in the two previous years. Results at the higher grades A-B were in line with the national average in 1999 and 1997 and above average in 1998.
121. The current attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is average overall but many are above average. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils can, for example, compile accurate annotated maps and diagrams, sometimes using them together with good quality extended writing in well researched enquiry work. These qualities are illustrated particularly well in their work on the San Francisco and Kobe earthquakes. Most pupils can extract relevant information from a range of sources such as textbooks, CD-ROM and video recordings. In a lesson on national parks, Year 9 pupils, studying the differing demands of visitors and residents, were able to recognise clearly that human activities may have

unintended environmental consequences and may lead to conflict. Lower attaining pupils can describe but have more difficulty explaining human impact on the environment.

122. Attainment by the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. This represents a marked improvement since the previous inspection. Higher attaining pupils produce high quality course work, using statistical methods to analyse their collected fieldwork data. They have for example, a good grasp of the relative importance of the different factors influencing the location of industry. In a lesson on the 'green revolution' they showed a good appreciation of the advantages and disadvantages of introducing new technology to farming in less developed countries, and a good understanding of the associated technical terminology. All pupils handle Ordnance Survey maps confidently, using their map reading skills in a variety of contexts. As at Key Stage 3, lower attaining pupils find tasks requiring extended writing difficult.
123. The overall attainment of students in Year 13 is well above average. Evidence from recent mock examinations suggests that while half the students have yet to achieve the fluency in essay writing that will ensure the highest grades, the general level of attainment is high. Students have a good understanding of geographical models and their limitations, as shown when studying land use distribution in Norwich. Their well-researched course work includes the use of advanced statistical techniques for data analysis and hypothesis testing. Their folders of work are well organised with clear, detailed notes that should prove to be a valuable revision resource.
124. The quality of teaching is good and some is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, although there were some unsatisfactory features of teaching at Key Stage 3. Overall standards of teaching represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The best teaching is at A-level and the least strong at Key Stage 3, where merely satisfactory teaching occurs most frequently.
125. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge, although this is less true among those non-specialist teachers who are deployed solely at Key Stage 3. Teachers' recapitulation of recent work at the beginning of lessons assists pupils to both recall and consolidate earlier learning and to make good progress in most lessons. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenging tasks, enthusiasm for the subject, variety of approach and sensible allocation of time to different activities. These qualities were well illustrated in a Year 9 lesson, when the teacher acted as facilitator, enabling pupils to respond well to the task of completing a booklet on tourism in Majorca. Pupils enjoyed this challenge and the teamwork that was required for them to complete the task. When pupils are given opportunities to organise their own learning, as in enquiry work at Key Stage 3 and in coursework for GCSE and A-level, they show initiative and enterprise and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are overwhelmingly positive in the majority of lessons. They particularly enjoy practical work, as when using Ordnance Survey maps, and the frequent occasions when they are required to work collaboratively in pairs or small groups, but there are too many lessons which are teacher led and which do not give such opportunities for independent learning. In some comparatively less successful lessons, which occur at Key Stage 3 and are taught by mainly non-specialists, explanations are not as clear causing confusion, and the pace of lessons and use of time are not as good. Pupils' concentration lapses in a minority of lessons where variety is lacking and tasks are not geared sufficiently to the needs of individual pupils.
126. A good tutorial style in the sixth form encourages students to become involved in discussions on a range of issues. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, especially when learning support assistants are in attendance. Teachers' marking is completed regularly, but its quality is inconsistent and the use of constructive comment, pointing the way forward for pupils, is infrequent.
127. Effective teamwork and leadership assist the good work of the department. Opportunities for pupils would be improved further by ensuring that tasks set always match the needs of individuals and by providing more opportunities for pupils to use and improve their computer skills.

## **HISTORY**

128. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations was well above the

national average in 1999 and 1997 and above average in 1998. In 1999 results at the highest grades A\*/A were much higher than the national average and a further improvement on the two previous years when they were above average. In 1999, 13 of 56 candidates achieved A\* grades which was easily the best performance at that level of all the school's GCSE subjects in that year. At A-level, results were below average at grades A-E in 1999 and in line with the national average over the two previous years. Results were well above average at grades A-B in 1997 but below average in the last two years.

129. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils demonstrate good historical knowledge and can communicate it effectively in writing. They show good chronology and enquiry skills but their understanding of interpretations of history is less well developed. Pupils' attainment in the key elements of history varies between some teaching groups at Key Stage 3. This is due to an over emphasis upon the acquisition of knowledge in some groups. In examining the importance of religion in the Tudor period one group was given far more detail than they could handle and more than was needed to complete a source based activity. Nevertheless the majority of pupils of all abilities are making satisfactory progress aptly illustrated by the quality of learning in a Year 8 lesson, where pupils showed increased understanding of the events leading up to the Battle of Marston Moor through studying plans of troop movements. Year 9 pupils made good progress in understanding what conditions were like in the trenches in World War 1 aided in their discussion by clips from a film interpretation of 'All Quiet on the Western Front'.
130. At the end of Key Stage 4 the standard of attainment is well above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils are able to explain historical situations, such as how the Nazi party used propaganda to maintain their control of Germany after 1933. They also show a good understanding of the significance of such twentieth century events as the Suez Crisis of 1956. Year 10 pupils were able to critically use a collection of sources about the Munich Putsch to discuss which view of Hitler's actions was most likely to be accurate. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress.
131. The standard of attainment at the end of current Year 13 is above the national average. Pupils are able to give very good written and oral explanations for complex historical events such as how the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo sparked off the Great War. In class they showed very good factual knowledge of the key events of the period and their influence on the long-term development of German Unification under the leadership of Prussia.
132. The quality of teaching at A-level, GCSE and at Key Stage 3 is good. This has a positive impact on standards achieved by pupils of all abilities. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good at A-level, GCSE and at Key Stage 3. Their behaviour is good as seen in a Year 8 class when pupils made use of a variety of shared resources in studying the Spanish Armada. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Extensive subject knowledge is a strong feature of teaching particularly with A-level and GCSE classes. Across the history department a wide range of teaching and learning styles is used. In a Year 7 lesson, where the teacher set up an activity based upon the Bayeux Tapestry, pupils enjoyed finding out how best to manage the task of using so many extracts from the Tapestry. The teacher gave them just enough help to do this but stopped short of giving them the answer. This allowed them to reach a high level of both historical understanding and independence in their learning. Again, in a Year 8 lower ability group the supportive and disciplined atmosphere created by the teacher, and the way in which the work was carefully broken down into small steps, allowed pupils to maintain their concentration, and to retell the events of the Spanish Armada of 1588 from the English and Spanish points of view. Behaviour in such lessons is good and concentration levels are high. Subject take up by the pupils is steady at GCSE and at A-level. In these examination groups pupils quite clearly were enjoying their study of history. Where teaching was less successful pupils were given too much information or were asked to do tasks which were too difficult. In such cases pupils became discouraged and made less progress. The fact that every pupil has a copy of a history textbook helps in setting well-focused homework.
133. The department is well led with very good day-to-day management of resources and administration. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in the quality of classroom display and in increasing the range of teaching and learning styles, though there is still room for some improvement here. The discussion of good lessons in history department meetings, the sharing of classroom activities and the department's involvement in initial teacher training have all had a positive influence. The formal departmental monitoring of

teaching has been in operation for two terms and is also having a positive impact on teaching. Further checks should be made at Key Stage 3 to ensure a common experience for pupils. More emphasis needs to be placed, in otherwise conscientious marking, on what pupils need to do to improve their skills in history. Opportunities should be sought to make use of ICT. The strengths of site visits, pupil writing and pupils' preparedness for examinations have all been maintained.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

134. GCSE short course results have been broadly in line with national averages over two years and there was a particularly strong A\*/A performance at grades A\*/A in 1998. Although all pupils follow an information and communication technology course at Key Stage 4, not all enter for the GCSE examination.
135. Overall standards of attainment in work meet national expectations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form where the key skills programme applies. Standards vary according to the different types of work undertaken using ICT. At both key stages, pupils use computers to research, organise, and present information very effectively. They are able to combine software applications for such purposes and make confident use of the internet for research and communication purposes. These capabilities stem in part from a high level of computer ownership at home. Pupils have a good understanding of the construction and function of simple databases. By the end of Key Stage 3, all pupils can create sets of instructions to control working models built from kits, and most are able to refine their instructions to get the models to perform more complex tasks. Their understanding of how computers can monitor and measure events and their capability with spreadsheets is lower than expectations, as shown by current Year 11 pupils, partly as a result of their limited experiences at Key Stage 3.
136. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at both key stages and good in key skills in the sixth form, but there are some weaknesses at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 pupils in Year 7 receive a good grounding in basic skills in a range of applications through being taught ICT in classes specifically devoted to that subject. Such classes are well taught, and taking into account the existing good levels of computer literacy of the large majority of pupils, teachers introduce pupils quickly to new ways of working, such as word processing for publishing on a web page. Pupils respond and work with pace and enthusiasm to such very good challenges. Learning was however unsatisfactory in this programme where a class of 28 pupils had to squeeze into a small room with 15 available computers and the teacher without technical support had to spend a large proportion of the time solving logistical and technical problems before all pupils could start working. In Years 8 and 9 pupils are no longer taught in specialist ICT classes and teaching of ICT through most subjects is variable. Design and technology plays a major role in Year 9 in teaching new skills such as computer control work, and reinforcing existing skills which generates evidence for end of key stage assessments. At Key Stage 4 in a discreet ICT programme, lessons are mostly well structured to give classes challenging objectives and teachers make very good use of the 'net op' facility to give on-screen demonstrations of work. Some lower attainers, however, are given insufficient guidance and reinforcement with basic functions and skills at this stage. Across all stages keyboarding skills are weak and this restricts the speed of work when processing text. There is insufficient curriculum time allocated at Key Stage 4 for those pupils following the short GCSE course as current Year 10 pupils have only one period a week for one year to complete the course. Some unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4 stems from the lack of curriculum time, shortcomings in classroom management and the poor behaviour of some pupils.
137. Across both Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils are given some opportunities to work with computers in other subjects. In mathematics, modern foreign languages and music, computers are used very effectively in lessons to improve pupils' work, and teachers in English give encouragement to pupils to use home computers for research and presentation of work. Some datalogging is covered in science. Religious education uses computers well and has its own web site with pages dedicated to each stage of the subject and to conferences, activities and festivals. Religious education is the only subject however which supplies assessment data to the ICT co-ordinator to help in the monitoring of pupils' progress as they move through the school. ICT is also used appropriately in classes where pupils are being helped to improve their literacy skills. The possibilities of e-mail are tapped in industrial mentoring programmes at Key Stage 4 and used when mentors wish to contact mentees again before the next meeting.

In most other subjects opportunities to use ICT are underdeveloped. In the sixth form, ICT key skills in the GNVQ programme are well supported and managed in specifically timetabled classes and students are clear about the management of their key skills log books which motivates them to use computers to good effect in the communication and handling of data. There is good encouragement in psychology for students to use their computer programs at home to analyse data, for example in assessing the reliability and validity of psychometric tests. Equality of opportunity is preserved by the teacher making alternative arrangements for students who do not have access to such facilities outside school.

138. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in computer hardware and software facilities. A programme of training for teachers has been operating, and will be reinforced by the New Opportunities Fund. Opportunities to use ICT in other subjects remain uneven, and the need for a planned programme remains, so that the progress of all pupils can be monitored through the key stages. Whilst provision at Key Stage 4 now allows all pupils to receive their statutory entitlements, opportunities for pupils aiming at a formal qualification are restricted by the poor time allocation.
139. The subject is very well led and there have been some significant improvements in recent years. There is a clear vision on how to improve standards in the future. Good structures are in place to improve further, but the ICT task group needs to receive a firmer commitment from subjects to use ICT more and assess and report on pupils' capability so that information can be recorded centrally. There is insufficient time allocated for technical support to manage a growing computer network and to provide appropriate levels of direct assistance for teachers in the classroom.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

140. In 1999, GCSE results in French at grades A\*-C were below average but girls achieved average results compared with girls nationally. The relative performance of pupils in French was significantly lower than the same pupils achieved in their other subjects in 1999. The overall results were depressed by only 12 per cent of boys being successful at A\*-C grades. GCSE results in the two previous years were well below average again mainly as a result of the performance of boys. Results at the highest grades A\*/A have been below average. In German, results have improved over the last three years and in 1999, despite boys being below average, the overall percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was above average. A\*/A grades in German have been below average.
141. At A-level all four students entered for German in 1999 achieved A-E grades with one achieving the top A grade. Nearly all of the small numbers entered for French in recent years have been successful at grades A-E with a good representation of grades A-B.
142. The current attainment of pupils in their first foreign language, French or German, is average at the end of Key Stage 3 and matches the most recent National Curriculum teacher assessments. Pupils' attainment in the most challenging lessons is higher than average, but in a minority they are hampered because the work is too elementary. Higher attaining pupils start a second language in Year 8, but have less time to study it, so their attainment is lower than average at the end of the key stage. Most pupils can follow lessons delivered in the foreign languages and read texts ranging from short captions to informal letters. By the end of the key stage the more able linguists can use different tenses to write short descriptive passages and most pupils can converse briefly about themselves, their families and their daily lives. As well as acquiring vocabulary appropriate to a range of topics, many gain a useful insight into French and German grammar.
143. Current attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is higher than recent results in French indicate and matches the improved results in German. Boys still attain lower levels than girls, although this is less marked than previously. By the end of the key stage, higher attainers in German can work independently on a circuit of linked activities exercising the skills they will require in their examination. They use tape recorders and dictionaries and rehearse role-plays well with the foreign language assistant. Pupils in French work constructively in groups on topics such as the media, extracting details from authentic texts to use in oral presentations. Lower attainers, including some pupils with special educational needs, make a fresh start in French, German or Spanish. They acquire simple language needed for living and travelling abroad as they work through topics leading to a certificate of achievement.

144. In lessons, sixth form students can talk and write discursively on a range of contemporary issues such as healthy living and human conflict, basing their arguments on personal research. While their discussions are usually lively and spontaneous, only a minority develop the breadth of vocabulary or degree of grammatical accuracy needed to gain the higher grades.
145. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory. The majority of lessons in all key stages is good and a minority of these is very good. A combination of established good practice and the recent appointment of lively and imaginative teachers has improved the presentation and effectiveness of many lessons. A minority of teaching is still too predictable and based too heavily on exercises from textbooks and worksheets. Lessons are conducted wholly or largely in the foreign languages, pitched either at a challenging or an accessible level to suit the pupils' abilities. Most are planned to provide practical activities, such as a game about travel, a survey of pets or a telephone call to the office, all based on preparatory exercises. Teachers make and use interesting visual aids and materials, including board games and prompt cards for pupils to read from or manipulate. They can usually stimulate reluctant learners through competitions, mime and role-play, ensuring that effort is acknowledged and rewarded. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, are co-operative and appreciate opportunities to learn independently, in groups or in pairs. Many higher attainers in Key Stages 3 and 4 display real curiosity about grammar, and some older pupils and sixth-form students, extend and enrich their learning through personal research, study and travel. Potentially disaffected classes work hard using computers, but despite some very effective use teachers do not exploit the potential of ICT enough. A minority of pupils, mostly boys, are indolent and unresponsive despite their teachers' best efforts, occasionally lapsing into disruptive behaviour and achieving little. Teachers use regular tests and continuous informal monitoring to assess and record their pupils' progress. They work closely with colleagues to support pupils with special educational needs. Their marking is thorough and often supported by encouraging remarks, but they do not always inform pupils how they can improve.
146. The department is well managed, and delegated responsibilities are equitably shared. Teachers are discursive, buoyant and purposeful. They have worked hard with their assistants to improve the quality of both teaching and learning. Some problems stemming from shortage of accommodation, inadequate teaching and deficiencies in the timetable have been resolved, but pupils still achieve less in French and German than in other subjects. Further progress will be made through better monitoring and evaluation of teaching, pooling the best practice, and by developing the process of assessment to involve pupils and parents more fully in setting individual targets.

## MUSIC

147. In 1999 and 1998, GCSE results were well above national averages at grades A\*-C and A\*/A. They improved from the below average results at A\*-C in 1997. At A-level although there have been too few candidates in any one year to make valid comparisons with national averages, all 11 candidates over the past three years have been successful at grades A-E.
148. By the end of Key Stage 3, almost all pupils are at the national expectation and a substantial number are above expectation. Performing is a strength, students can play keyboards confidently and many of them read staff notation. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils achieve above national expectations and many well above. Performing is very strong, as is appraisal. Many pupils are competent listeners, able to evaluate their own performances and identify accurately the main musical features of new pieces they hear. Composing is the area in which there is greater variety of ability, but all pupils understand the principles of form and structure and many, though not all, use them well. Sixth-form students are at the upper end of national expectation where again performing is strength, as are listening and appraising skills. Year 13 students reach expectations in their historical knowledge and skills of analysis. They know their set work well and can quote from it. Singing is a strength across the school.
149. Nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory or better and nearly a half is very good or excellent. As a consequence standards of learning have improved since the last inspection. Learning is good in Key Stage 3, very good in Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. This is because teachers plan interesting lessons with varied resources, such as in Year 7 where 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice' is used as inspiration for listening and performing and to make a good contribution to literacy through story writing. Brisk questioning is frequently used to check

pupils' understanding before new work is tackled. Books are marked helpfully and pupils are given ample support and encouragement in class. Information and communication technology is used well for composing in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form with high quality software, although a shortage of computers for the large groups taking GCSE limits access. Where teaching has minor weaknesses it is because pace is lost towards the end of a lesson or when a small minority of lively boys distract other pupils. Key Stage 3 pupils do not record their own music enough, due to a lack of tape recorders. Most lessons include at least two linked activities, one of them a substantial performing element, for example in Year 9 using Mozart's 'Eine Kleine Nachtmusik' for aural appraisal and then for performance as a duet. This approach leads to strong performing standards at all levels of the school. Performing is also promoted by very good extra-curricular teaching, and by lots of opportunities for ensemble playing in class and through an excellent choice of extra-curricular activities, which are a real strength of the department and well attended. Imaginative use is made of resources external to the department, such as the Royal Air Force Regiment band which visited the school during the inspection week, setting an example of very high standards and offering a splendid performing opportunity to three of the school's most experienced brass players who were invited to join them on stage.

150. Pupils with special educational needs are supported through careful planning. More able musicians are offered greater levels of challenge, such as a Year 9 trio making their own arrangement of a Mozart melody. Older students take leading parts in school musicals and conduct ensembles. Weaker musicians are helped by the use of good quality resources, with particularly useful worksheets for non-music readers. However, there is not enough in-class learning support for the weakest pupils.
151. Pupils' attitudes to music are very good, with the exception of a small minority of boys in Key Stage 3 who do not collaborate well and waste each other's time. GCSE numbers are rising, promoted by the fact that it is offered in three option groups, which enables able pupils who are also musicians to take music as an extra subject. Recent past students and some current sixth-formers plan to pursue musical careers.
152. Assessment of work is satisfactory, but assessment information is not compared year-on-year, nor are samples of Key Stage 3 work kept for monitoring. The monitoring of the department's work over time is over-dependent on teachers' memories. Reports to parents are helpful and evaluative but the most able students are not always given points for development. Parents are appreciative of the breadth of opportunity which the department offers their children.
153. The head of department leads with panache and great attention to both the broad vision of the department and the minutiae of managing it. However, the head of department does not have enough time to monitor teaching formally on a regular basis, though informal sharing of good practice is on-going in the department. Technician support is lacking, which means teachers have to spend time mending headphones. However, the department's biggest shortfall continues to be its accommodation, which is poor because there is insufficient space for all pupils to work without aural interference, a particular problem in Key Stage 4.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

154. GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average at grades A\*-C compared with all schools. The percentage achieving A\*/A grades was above average. Girls performed better than boys at A\*-C but the boys achieved the highest number of A\*/A grades. Results have been in line with or above the national average over the last three years with the exception of 1998 when they were just below. At A-level all pupils achieved A-E grades and the number of pupils achieving A-B grades was well above the national average. Results have been consistently good over the last four years and compare favourably with the results achieved by the same pupils in their other subjects in the school.
155. Attainment by the majority at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. A significant minority attain above these expectations and a few attain below. Swimming and girls' gymnastics are strengths. The majority of pupils swim confidently and with good technique in a variety of strokes. In gymnastics the girls create and perform complex sequences on the floor and apparatus, that are refined and exciting to watch. A minority of the boys have advanced badminton skills. They are able to outwit an opponent with speed, accuracy and guile. All of the pupils recognise the importance of rules and apply them. They

are able to make basic evaluations about their own and each others' performance, but these skills are not sufficiently developed. They understand the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle. The boys who play in the school basketball teams at both key stages, have above average skills and are able to apply effective strategies and tactics in a competitive situation.

156. Attainment by the majority studying GCSE is average relative to examination requirements and a significant minority reach above average standards. Pupils mostly have a good depth of knowledge but are generally not confident in the use of technical language when speaking. Higher attaining pupils present written work that is well structured with careful analysis. Practical work for the majority is average with a significant minority above average. They have a good understanding of the syllabus requirements and effectively link practical and theoretical concepts. They demonstrate increasingly refined techniques in their chosen activities. A minority of pupils have limited subject knowledge and their notes and homework are often incomplete. Their practical work is satisfactory, but they find it difficult to concentrate on the theoretical aspects.
157. In the sixth form attainment by the majority of students studying both A-level courses is above the national average and average for a minority with a few below average. Higher attaining students produce work that is carefully researched and analysed making good cross-references to other aspects of the course. They are confident in the use of technical language in their written work and enter into lively, informed debate in lessons. Those who are not meeting course requirements have limited knowledge and their work shows little evidence of independent research. In addition students have the opportunity to follow the well-organised Community Sports Leader Award. Their attention to detail in the organisation of a badminton tournament was exceptional. They had the maturity to improvise when circumstances changed and accurately analysed their own performance in relation to the task.
158. The quality of the teaching is nearly always good or better, with the majority good. A small minority of teaching is excellent. There is an element of satisfactory teaching at both key stages. Standards of teaching represent an improvement since the previous inspection. Specialist teachers have a depth of knowledge which ensures that pupils have a solid grasp of skills and strategies. Almost all lessons are reinforced with probing question and answer sessions to consolidate knowledge and provoke thought. An appropriate range of teaching methods is used which encourages valuable responses. A good example of this was seen in an anatomical A-level lesson where students quickly consolidated their knowledge and acquired greater understanding of the dissection of a muscle through analysis and discussion. Teacher and pupil demonstration is effectively used to help pupils improve as, for example, in a gymnastics lesson where they evaluated a particular skill and then used these observations to refine their own performance. The setting of tasks to develop evaluative skills is not yet consistent between teachers. Targets at the end of a key stage are more successfully met in the girls' lessons because their schemes of work are directly related to curriculum requirements. Ongoing assessment in lessons is constructive, ensuring individual and group progress and there is nearly always sufficient time to transfer new and consolidated skills into the final activity. Teachers mostly have high expectations of all pupils and continually encourage them to strive for better performance appropriate to their ability. A good example of this was seen in a swimming lesson where pupils were required to swim different distances but still challenged and pushed for better performance and increase in stamina. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and make good progress. However, lower attaining pupils studying for GCSE make slow progress and behave poorly because strategies have not yet been designed to meet their needs. Marking of GCSE theoretical work is mostly constructive, but the department does not have a policy that ensures a standardised system between teachers at this level. The A-level marking scheme is well structured to the syllabus requirements and data is used effectively in conjunction with pupil input to set targets for improvement. The pupils are enthusiastic and there is a high rate of participation in all lessons. Opportunities are lost to develop the observational and coaching skills of those few pupils who are unable to physically take part in the lesson. There is a direct link between the best teaching and pupils' learning and response. Good practice should be highlighted more and used as a marker for improving standards further.
159. There is a particularly high participation rate in the excellent extra-curricular programme. Pupils are able to further their interests on trips abroad such as skiing and by representing the school, county and region in sporting and dance teams. The excellent links forged with local clubs and organisations also encourage pupils to participate in community activities. The

outdoor adventurous activities link is particularly strong. The numbers opting to study GCSE and A-level have increased dramatically in the last two years. Examination pupils take responsibility for organising clubs, officiating at matches and helping in lessons.

160. The profile of the department has risen further since the last inspection with the gaining of the Gold Sports Mark Award and Sports College status. The quality of teaching has improved and examination results at A-level are consistently good. The curriculum is continually evolving and is particularly broad at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form but at Key Stage 3 it is biased towards games and there is no opportunity for boys to study dance. The current assessment and reporting procedures do not relate to curriculum targets and do not specifically record what the pupils can and cannot do. This creates difficulties in continuity at Key Stage 3 especially where a large number of non-specialists teach games. The accommodation is looking tired and neglected and does not create a stimulating environment for the pupils. None of the indoor spaces are big enough for the teaching of games such as badminton or basketball to large classes. The changing rooms on the north site are in a poor state of repair and hygiene. The day-to-day running of this large department remains efficiently organised. There are significant new challenges and opportunities on the horizon with developments associated with a Sports College status.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

161. GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average in relation to both higher A\*-C grades and overall grades A\*-G. Pupils also gained well above the national percentage for A\*/A grades. In 1998 results were in line with national averages and in 1997 well above national levels.
162. By the end of Key Stage 3 overall attainment is above the level of expectation of the Agreed Syllabus. Pupils display good knowledge and understanding of the significance of symbolism in religion and of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as well as the relevance of Jesus to modern day life. Higher attaining pupils' knowledge and understanding is very good and they are beginning to develop understanding of key ideas and issues shared by the religions they encounter. They are also able to relate their knowledge of religions to other spheres of influence, for example the environment and the growth of a social conscience. A good example was observed in a lesson on the Genesis story of creation when they discussed the importance of looking after God's world.
163. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment of pupils on the GCSE course is well above the national average. Most pupils have good listening skills and a good understanding of the varying interpretations of the Bible adopted by different groups of Christians. Only GCSE pupils are taught religious education regularly in set lessons but all pupils are taught through five one-day conferences. Students on the A-level course in Year 12, are attaining in line with the requirements of the examination syllabus. There are currently no students in the upper sixth.
164. Teaching is always satisfactory with a significant proportion of good and very good practice. Learning overall in lessons and over time is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in the GCSE and A-level groups. Progress in learning of the higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 is also good. Enthusiastic teaching contributes to learning particularly, but not exclusively, in the examination groups. Attention is given to the development of basic literacy and information technology skills and there are opportunities for pupils to write in a range of styles. The use of topic work, for example, on places of worship and religious festivals, helps develop information gathering and analytical skills. Teachers use religious artefacts skilfully to enable pupils to understand sacred writings and other aspects of worship. Good examples were observed in lessons on the Bible and worship in the synagogue. The individual needs of all pupils are mostly catered for by the tasks and approaches used. In Key Stage 3 however insufficient attention is sometimes given to the needs of lower attaining pupils. In other lessons carefully prepared tasks to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils are used. Learning is helped by the use of homework, which integrates with classwork and assists pupils to develop writing skills. Lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace and are interesting in content. Very good classroom management, in most lessons, enables all pupils to learn. Learning is also enhanced in most classes by careful marking, appropriate expectations and by the setting of an effective range of learning objectives. There are, however, inconsistencies in the quality of marking. In a very small percentage of otherwise satisfactory lessons weaker class management and a tendency for lengthy teacher talk has a limiting affect on learning.

Pupils' positive attitudes towards the subject in a significant number of lessons also influences the quality of learning and the progress made. Pupils on the special educational needs register make satisfactory progress with the support of class teachers. Virtually no special needs support is provided even for statemented pupils in lessons. The quality of display work used by teachers varies in quality.

165. The amount of time allocated to Key Stage 3 enables the programme of study of the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus to be covered. The lack of discrete time for pupils not engaged on the GCSE course, results in the school not fully meeting statutory requirements at Key Stage 4. The five one-day conferences organised and planned by the head of department are of high quality and contribute to pupils' personal development, but do not cover sufficient subject content as required by the programme of study of the Agreed Syllabus. In the sixth form the absence of provision is also a breach of a legal requirement to provide religious education for all registered pupils. With the exception of the introduction of the day conferences, this is a similar situation to the one which existed at the time of the last report.
166. The department continues to be enthusiastically and well managed. The four teachers work well as a team and this has a very positive influence on learning. The scheme of work at Key Stage 3 is well written and contains clear learning objectives. A widely scattered department is a disadvantage. The provision of a department web site is an exciting development and is beneficial not only to pupils but also to parents. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, only confined by the limited timetable allocation in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

## **ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS STUDIES**

167. GCSE results in economics, with a higher percentage entry rate than other schools nationally, were above average at grades A\*-C in 1999 and well above in the two previous years. GCSE results in business studies, were well below average at grades A\*-C in 1999 although all were successful at A\*-G. There was a big difference between boys' and girls' results in 1999 with girls broadly average for girls nationally, but boys well below average. At A-level a total of 13 candidates in the last two years achieved well above average results at both grades A-E and A-B. Of the small cohort of four candidates in 1999, two achieved the top A grade.
168. Currently the attainment in economics at Key Stage 4 is above average but is well below in business studies. Some business studies pupils have a grasp of basic theory, but have difficulty in applying their ideas. For example in a lesson on types of business, pupils were able to distinguish between various forms of ownership, but struggled with the concept of the identification of stakeholders. In another lesson pupils made little progress on a case study and showed scant knowledge of the meaning of assets and liabilities. In contrast pupils in GCSE economics are more confident performers who are able to apply their more extensive knowledge. The majority of pupils following the course in economics have acquired a basic understanding of key theories such as price and are able to discuss with conviction factors that might cause the price of a particular product to change.
169. The attainment of present A-level economics students is high and well above average. They have a good theoretical understanding and are able to offer analysis and hypothesis of quite complex issues. For example, Year 12 students show a good understanding of factors affecting wage rates and Year 13 students were able to apply conventional theory to a variety of issues. In one lesson they offered explanations of why the marginal cost of oil production in the former Soviet Union is higher than in the Gulf States, and how prices in the former communist block were distorted by bilateral trade agreements, which disturbed market equilibrium prices.
170. Teaching in economics is at least good at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, some is very good or excellent. In economics pupils at Key Stage 4 and A-level students are developing a very good level of understanding of the complexities of economic theory with their learning influenced positively by the quality of teaching. Pupils work with interest and enthusiasm, and participate in discussion responding positively to the demanding challenges presented. In business studies at GCSE teaching is poor and work set is not geared sufficiently to the needs of pupils, but they are not easy to teach and many are poorly motivated and cannot cope with the subject content. Their general knowledge is weak, they are easily distracted and learning and attainment suffers.

171. The department has continued to build on its strengths identified in the previous inspection report and economics students, in particular, continue to enjoy considerable success in public examinations. The department also makes a valid contribution to the economic literacy of students following vocational courses in the sixth form. Further improvements should materialise with closer monitoring of the quality of teaching in business studies and through the use of target setting in all groups. The department should consider how it might make its work known to a wider audience through concerted efforts to celebrate success and displays of work around the school.

## **OTHER SIXTH-FORM PROVISION**

### **Psychology and sociology**

172. A-level results in psychology in 1999 were well above average at both grades A-E and A-B. All candidates in psychology achieved A-E grades, seven of the 11 candidates achieved A-B grades and four of these the top A grade. Psychology results represented very good progress and 'value added' by students in relation to their overall results at GCSE. Sociology results have been consistently above average at grades A-E in the last three years but less consistent at A-B grades. The majority of the current Year 13 students in psychology and sociology are on course to achieve A-E grades and some are working at a high level. Standards in psychology in Year 13 are not as high as the results achieved by the previous year group, but assessed work completed so far by students in Year 12 shows well above average standards. A further broadening of sixth form provision has been achieved by offering geology as a one year GCSE course. In 1999 results were well above average with over a quarter of candidates achieving A grades.

### **Vocational education**

173. Students currently following GNVQ courses in the sixth form are achieving standards at least in line with national expectations. Samples of completed work in all three vocational areas show such standards. Some students, especially in the advanced leisure and tourism course and the intermediate health and social care option, attain well above average standards. Overall results in 1998 and 1997 were close to national averages and much higher grades were achieved than in the latest round of results for 1999. In 1999 results were below expectations with only 63 per cent of students completing their courses and a smaller proportion achieving merits and distinctions.
174. There are many things that the students do well. Most students are developing good ICT skills. Work samples illustrated the use of ICT for word processing, data entry and analysis with line, bar and pie graphs being used in written presentations. Some students, especially in the leisure and tourism courses, use the internet for research purposes and many students, including foundation candidates on the health and social care course, use computer-generated graphics to enliven their presentations. Work is well presented with a sensible use being made of fonts and print sizes.
175. The arrangements made for the teaching of key skills has a positive effect on standards and the quality of learning and arrangements are much better than for GCE A-level students. Specialist staff are profitably used to teach key skills, with the tasks well integrated with coursework requirements. The quality of the written work of many students is good, with evidence of work being produced with different audiences in mind. Advanced level students in both business and leisure and tourism undertake extended written tasks successfully. All students write letters with appropriate attention to content and presentation and are able to use other forms of writing as appropriate including memos and reports. Intermediate leisure and tourism students use the internet to research holiday possibilities in various parts of the world including Cornwall, Greece and the United States of America in order to compile tourist guides, listing attractions and hotels. Higher attainers successfully incorporated other features, including maps and comments on the flora and fauna to be found in the vicinity. In addition to the good use of specialist staff for key skills, the contribution of economics teachers to the advanced business course helps students considerably in their understanding of the business

environment.

176. The overall quality of teaching across the range of vocation courses is good and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Good lessons are characterised by high expectations, enthusiasm, good preparation and a desire to challenge. A variety of teaching strategies ensures that the pace of lessons does not flag and to ensure that attention is maintained. For example, in an impressive advanced leisure and tourism lesson on fitness, the students were given clear instructions, a recap of previously acquired knowledge and then the students administered a range of fitness tests in which they participated and recorded their results. They were able to relate their learning to real life situations. Similarly impressive teaching was seen in an intermediate health and social care lesson on discrimination. The students were encouraged to consider various forms of discrimination. The subject matter was handled with considerable sensitivity and the students responded with great maturity. Following their discussions, the students were presented with a number of short case studies to analyse for themselves, with emphasis being placed on the need to resolve the underlying conflict. The students' response to these challenges was excellent.
177. Less effective teaching was associated with insufficient preparation as seen in an advanced business lesson where students worked on a past multiple-choice papers. Though the students enjoyed the lesson, there was a lack of pace. Explanation was not offered sufficiently early enough when students encountered terms which they did not understand such as 'return on capital employed'.
178. As the previous inspection noted, vocational education is an important part of the school's post-16 provision. The department has continued to develop and is successfully offering a significant cohort of students an alternative route whereby academic success can be gained. Some of the problems highlighted in the previous inspection report remain. The quality of teaching accommodation is often poor. Some leisure and tourism lessons are held in a music room and a chemistry laboratory, both of which are unsuitable venues for vocational education, presenting staff with severe difficulties in terms of resources to enliven lessons. The previous report referred to the 'poor ambience' and the 'intrusive noise' associated with the mobile classrooms that are used for many lessons. These problems remain. Indeed, for part of the inspection period, some of the mobile classrooms were without an electricity supply, but the lessons continued in rather dark and increasingly cold circumstances. The other main issue facing the department concerns completion rates. Whilst the school is rightly aware of the contribution which vocational courses make to pupils' personal development and social welfare improved monitoring and assessment procedures, allied to the setting of individual targets could improve completion rates and final grades.