

# INSPECTION REPORT

## THE PURBECK SCHOOL

WAREHAM DORSET

LEA area: DORSET

Unique reference number: 113855

Headteacher: Mr Andrew J Smetham

Reporting inspector: Brian Rowe  
1695

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> January 2000

Inspection number: 185227

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	13 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Paul Thomas
Date of previous inspection:	15 <sup>th</sup> May 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Brian Rowe	Registered inspector	Special Educational Needs	What sort of school is it The school's results and achievements How well are students taught How well is the school led and managed
Brian Sampson	Lay inspector		What sort of school is it The school's results and achievements How well are students taught How well is the school led and managed
George Harris	Team inspector	Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Lionel Faraway	Team inspector	English Drama	
Jacqueline Watson	Team inspector	Science	
Miles Robottom	Team inspector	History	
Sylvia A Greenland	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to students
Michael Pennington	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Information communication technology Design technology	
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Shirley M Stanley	Team inspector	Music	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Purbeck School is a mixed comprehensive school situated in the town of Wareham in the county of Dorset. It caters for students between the ages of 13 – 18. Students come from a large geographical area encompassing the whole of the Isle of Purbeck, some 200 square miles. A significant proportion of students are from local army families and many of them will have attended a number of different primary schools. The local economy is based on agriculture, seasonal tourism and some light industry.

There are 1155 students on roll. The percentage of students from ethnic minority groups is 0.6 per cent, which is very low compared to national averages. There are considerably more boys in school than girls, except in the sixth form where girls significantly outnumber the boys.

The proportion of students receiving free school meals (ten per cent) has remained much the same each year although this figure may vary slightly between year groups. This is lower than the national average. No students live in homes where English is not the first language.

An analysis of students' attainment on entry from reviewing their Key Stage 2 national test scores and other standardised tests taken at school, shows that levels of attainment are close to, but slightly below, the national average. Two hundred and forty seven (21.3 per cent) students are on the special educational needs register, 26 of whom have Statements of Special Educational Need (2.25 per cent) which is higher than national averages.

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

The Purbeck School is a good and effective school. It mostly achieves academic standards that are as good as they should be, and in some subjects they are better. The attainment of students in the sixth form is well above national averages and is achieved on a cost effective basis. Students have very positive attitudes about the school and are keen to improve their own performance. They are very well behaved and form positive relationships with each other and their teachers. Almost all the teaching is satisfactory and a high proportion is good or better. The overall good quality of teaching ensures that students are learning well. The school has developed a broad curriculum, including work related and vocation courses, to meet the needs of all the students. Some aspects such as the provision for careers and personal and social education are outstanding. There is a very high level of care and support for students and the school has developed very good procedures to monitor and support students' academic and personal development. The vast majority of parents regard the school highly and they receive excellent information about their child's progress and what is happening in school. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and is continually looking for ways to improve. Management is good overall and the school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. The school is led and managed in a cost- effective way and provides satisfactory value for money

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

- Provides a very high quality of education in the sixth form where students achieve high standards.
- Provides a high quality of education for science, physical education and religious education throughout the school.
- Good teaching motivates students and ensures their positive response in lessons.
- Provides a high level of care and support for students; this is especially successful for students with special needs and the provision for personal social and careers education.
- Creates a positive environment to promote students' behaviour, attitudes, values and personal development.
- Establishes good links with the community and parents and provides excellent information about the students' progress.

### What could be improved

- The teaching of basic skills in literacy.
- The rigour of monitoring and evaluation procedures, particularly ensuring that the steps taken to secure improvements are always fully implemented.
- The quality of middle management to match the best practice in school.
- Cross-curricular developments in information communication technology

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

The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

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

The previous OFSTED inspection took place in May 1995. Overall, the school has made good improvements since that inspection. The notable exception is that it has not sufficiently raised students' achievements at Key Stages 3 and 4 to keep pace with rising national trends. However, some departments such as science, learning support, religious education and physical education have made significant improvements.

The key issues identified in the previous report have been addressed appropriately together with other important aspects of school development. These other aspects include: raising standards in some departments where there was underachievement; introducing longer-term strategic planning; rationalising staffing costs to increase capitation; improving the accommodation and environment; establishing more effective monitoring and evaluation systems; setting individual targets for students' progress and broadening the curriculum to include more opportunities for vocational education. Although there have been improvements to the provision for daily worship, the school still does not meet the statutory requirement to provide daily worship for every student.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and this has ensured a dramatic rise in attainment in the sixth form results in both A Level and vocational courses. Also teachers are addressing the differences in the attainment of boys and girls and the school has been successful in improving boys' performance to narrow the previous wide gap in their achievement.

### STANDARDS

#### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	145	129	274

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	63	140	142
	Girls	66	122	123
	Total	129	262	265
Percentage of students achieving The standard specified	School	47.3 (47.8)	95.6 (94.1)	98.8 (98.9)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.9)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	40.2 (39.7)
Per pupil	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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	N/a	n/a
	National	N/a	n/a

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	B	B	C	D
Mathematics	C	C	C	D
Science	C	B	B	A

**Key**

Well above average      A

Above average          B

Average                    C

Below average            D

Well below average      E

At the time of the inspection ten per cent of the students were claiming free school meals. For the purpose of comparing The Purbeck School with other similar schools the 9–13 per cent free school meals benchmark data has been used. This is because: the school annually loses a significant number of more able students to local selective schools; the number of boys in Key Stage 4 is significantly greater than the number of girls and the number of students with special educational needs is above the national average.

Compared to national averages, attainment in English declined during the last three years, mathematics results remained close to national trends and science has improved considerably during the last two years. Compared to the achievement of similar schools, in English and mathematics is it below average whilst science results are well above.

The quality of work seen in lessons mostly confirms these scores. The level of attainment in science is high but standards in English and mathematics do not reflect the students' full potential.

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	B	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	C	D	A	

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

GCSE results are not rising in-line with national trends but last year (1999) the school met its year 2000 target for the total GCSE points score. English results improved last year but are still below national averages. Mathematics results have remained at a constant level close to the national average but do not show trends of improvement. Science scores have been steadily rising and are now close to the national average. Overall students' attainment is satisfactory but their achievement is not high enough in relation to students' potential.

A Level and vocational examination results rose dramatically last year and were well above national average. Students achieve very well in the sixth form.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: The students' overall attitudes to the school are very good and a strength of the school. Enthusiasm for the school at all key stages is very good and most are invariably very keen and eager to come to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: The absence of oppressive behaviour, bullying, sexism or racism in the school is a notable feature
Personal development and relationships	Very good: The students are personally very aware of the impact of their actions on others. They respect each other's views and are polite to one other and adults in school.
Attendance	Satisfactory: The school's attendance figures are in-line with national averages and the school has no unexplained unauthorised absences. The majority of students arrive at school and into classes on time. The vast majority of lessons commence promptly.

The students' attitudes to school, their behaviour and personal development are strengths 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	Very good

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

The quality of teaching was sound or better in virtually all lessons observed. This included 70 per cent of the lessons when teaching was judged as good or better. In about 30 per cent of the lessons teaching was very good and in three lessons it was excellent. Overall, this represents a good profile for teaching and an improvement since the last inspection when about 90 per cent of the teaching was judged as satisfactory or better. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, the profile of teaching is similarly sound but the incidence of unsatisfactory teaching is higher at Key Stage 4. The profile of teaching is very good in the sixth form and reflects the high levels of attainment. Mostly teaching meets the needs of all students.

There are significant strengths in sixth form teaching, especially the good relationships between staff and students. Throughout the school, students' learning is enhanced by the teachers' very good management of students and their high level of subject expertise. There are weaknesses in teaching basic literacy skills. In some subjects, including English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, history, geography, design and information communication technology, effective teaching methods are not consistently used and this at times restricts students' progress.

In English, teaching is sound in Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The most significant weakness is the lack of activities planned to match the wide range of student ability in class.

In mathematics, the teaching seen during the inspection was good at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. At times students did not make sufficient progress because the pace and rigour of the lesson were not sufficient.

Teaching in science is good throughout the school and enhances the quality of students' learning and improvements in their attainment. In a few lessons, inappropriate teaching methods are used and students' progress is curtailed.

The students enter school at Year 9 with underdeveloped literacy skills. The lack of a continuous and progressive programme for teaching the basic skills across Key Stage 3 is a major factor inhibiting attainment in Key Stage 4. In particular, the average and lower attaining students are adversely affected by their writing, spelling and punctuation skills.

The teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory. However, the situation could be enhanced and made more effective if there was a whole-school policy to help teachers avoid duplication of effort and to ensure a consistent approach across all subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good: The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good overall with excellent provision in personal and social education, careers and vocational education. The community makes an excellent contribution to the school. However, there are relative weaknesses in the lack of strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, and in some of the curricular links with partner middle schools.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall good. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Students have a weekly assembly but there is insufficient time to make them of real significance as this is the only opportunity for collective worship in the week. There is a lack of involvement of students in taking these. The provision the school makes for the moral development of students is very good. Staff provide excellent role models and reinforce moral standards in tutor groups and through the excellent personal and social education programme. Social development provision is excellent and a strength of the school. All subjects encourage students to work together and support one another. There are numerous opportunities for social interaction via the extra-curricular activities provided and these are a great success despite the transport restrictions. Provision for the cultural development of students is good but the multicultural dimension is underdeveloped.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school provides a very high level of care for its students. The procedures for child protection are very good and a strength of the school.

The overall effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is good and makes a positive contribution to the students' education. Appropriately, the parents regard the school highly. The quality of information the school provides for parents through regular written communications and consultative meetings is excellent.

The school offers a broad and relevant curriculum to students of all abilities. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. The provision of personal, social and health education, careers and vocational education is excellent. There are relative weaknesses of which the school is aware and these include whole-school systems for teaching literacy and numeracy and the quality of curriculum development with its associated middle schools. There are no weaknesses in the level of care the school provides for the students.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: The headteacher, who is fully supported by a cohesive senior management team, has established a clear direction for the school that is appropriately focused on raising students' achievement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: The governing body has a strategic view of the school's development and many members are gaining in confidence with regard to fulfilling their role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: The school uses standardised data well to identify trends in student performance. The school has established a system of monitoring and evaluation that has helped to identify the strengths and weaknesses in school.
The strategic use of resources	Good: The school makes good use of finances, including specific grants, the accommodation and personnel.

The school has adequate staff for the number of students. Overall, resources have improved, but despite increased recent funding there is still a lack of sufficient books in English. The overall standard of accommodation is good.

There are examples of very good management at all levels in the school. The headteacher and senior management team have a clear vision for the school but the quality of middle managers varies considerably. More rigorous measures are required to ensure a greater consistency to match that of the best quality in school. With the exception of not complying to the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship and ensuring the full implementation of the National Curriculum for information communication technology, the governors fulfil all statutory requirements.

The school applies the principles of best value but is at the early stages of development as the LEA begins to devolve a greater proportion of its central funds.

## 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>• The children are happy and like to come to school;</li> <li>• The children make good progress;</li> <li>• The high quality of teaching;</li> <li>• Parents are well informed about progress;</li> <li>• The school deals well with questions and problems;</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of children;</li> <li>• The school is well managed and led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team endorses the positive views of the parents but has reservations that all students make sufficient progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 due to underdeveloped literacy skills. The inspectors do not agree with the view that the range of activities outside lessons is unsatisfactory. The school makes a good provision despite the difficulties imposed by transport arrangements.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The overall attainment of students on entry to the school (Year 9) is close to an average intake for comprehensive schools, and includes a full ability range. However, a significant number of higher attaining students choose to attend local selective schools in Year 8 and consequently The Purbeck School has fewer higher attaining students than might be expected for a school of its size. There are no students in school for whom English is an additional language. A significant proportion of students on entry have basic literacy skills that are below average for their age. By the time students reach the age of 16, their average total GCSE points score across all subjects is above average, when compared to all secondary schools. However, attainment when compared to similar schools is average. In 1999, the sixth form results from A/AS Level examinations were well above the national average. Results of GNVQ and other vocational courses were above national expectations.

#### **Key Stage 3**

2. The 1999 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 (when the students have been at Purbeck School for only eight months), reveal that the average points score for English, mathematics and science combined is above the national average. This result reflects the level of attainment over the last four years. Results over the last few years have varied slightly but overall have remained constant and not kept pace with the national trend of rising scores. The average points score for the core subjects when compared to similar schools (9–13 per cent free school meals benchmark) is close to the average. The points score for English and mathematics was below similar school averages but science results were well above. Although there are differences in the performance of boys and girls in the individual subjects, overall there is no significant difference between them. During the inspection, evidence gained from lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and talking to students confirms the level of attainment indicated by these results.
3. In the 1999 English tests, the proportion of students achieving the national average (Level 5) and the higher Level 6, was close to the national average. There has been a decline in the percentage of students reaching these grades over the past three years and the school results have fallen to below the average for similar schools. Although boys' attainment in these tests is well below that of the girls, the difference is similar to the difference nationally. Inspection evidence reflects these results and, by the age of 14, attainment is in-line with national expectations.
4. Students' attainment in mathematics tests was in-line with the national average for 1999, both for students achieving Level 5 or better and for those achieving Level 6 or more. When compared with the average points score obtained by students from similar schools results were below average. Boys and girls achieved similar standards. Mathematics results for 1999 were less good than those achieved in science but better than those for English. Over the years 1996 to 1999 the Key Stage 3 results were close to the national average.

5. Results in science tests in 1999 were well above national comparisons at the average level of attainment for 14 year olds. More than the average number of students attained higher levels in the tests. Overall standards have been similar since 1997 but there is an upward trend at the higher than average levels. The performance of girls was significantly below that of boys whose results far exceeded national comparisons. The school's results for science are better than those for English and mathematics and are very good when compared with results for similar schools
6. At the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9), attainment is in-line with national expectations in design technology, history, modern foreign languages and information communication technology. Students' attainment is above this standard in art, geography, music, physical education and religious education. Students' achievement in subjects that predominantly depend on writing and spelling competence is adversely effected by their below average basic literacy skills on entry to the school. In addition, information communication technology skills used across subjects are underdeveloped. Overall students' achievement is satisfactory but particularly good in science, art, physical education, religious education and for students with special educational needs.

#### **Key Stage 4**

7. In 1999, the school's total GCSE/GNVQ points score was above the national average. Both boys and girls achieved above the national average. In previous years the girls significantly outperformed boys but last year the school successfully raised the level of boys' achievement to close the difference on girls' performance. An analysis of the points score over the last three years indicates that boys' results were close to the national average whilst girls' results were above this standard. Over the last four years the trend in the school's average point score per pupil has not risen at the same level of improvements achieved nationally.
8. At the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11), the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A\*-C grades in the 1999 examinations was close to the national average. When compared to similar schools these results are also close to the national average but below the median score. The number of students gaining five or more A\*-C grades over the last four years has not improved significantly. In 1999, the proportion of students achieving five or more A\*-G grades was well above average when compared to all and similar schools. In recent years there has been a steady improvement in the numbers achieving A\*-G grades. The number of students gaining at least one GCSE is close to the national average. The school has made significant progress in raising the attainment of boys during the last two years and ensuring that students of all abilities gain examination success, also last year the school met its GCSE points score target for the year 2000. However, the overall trend of improvement is not satisfactory. The school is aware of this and is taking measures to raise the results of the GCSE A\* -C passes.
9. In the 1999 GCSE English Language and Literature examinations, the school has reversed the downward trend of the last three years. The proportion of students achieving the higher A\*-C grade passes is below the national expectation, but this year, the GCSE Language results are in-line with other similar schools. The performance of boys in both these examinations is

significantly lower than that of the girls, but the gap has narrowed over three years. Inspection evidence reflects these results, with attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in-line with national expectations.

10. Results for mathematics in the 1999 GCSE exams are broadly in-line with the national average. Students' results in mathematics are better than those in English but lower than science. When compared with students from similar schools the number of students achieving A\*-C is broadly average. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. The school has met the mathematics attainment targets set.
11. There has been an upward trend in science results since 1996 and in 1999 they reached national averages. Improvement in the performance of boys has been very good. Their results were close to those for girls in 1999. Science results are close to English and above those of mathematics.
12. The 1999 GCSE results in design technology and religious education are in-line with the national averages. In art, drama, music, and physical education results exceed national expectations. Students' achievement in geography, history, French and German is significantly lower than the school's average score.
13. The attainment of girls is higher than for boys, but slightly lower than national trends. This is partly due to the strategies used to improve boys' achievement. These strategies have included positive discrimination to include boys in top sets and even devising seating plans to ensure boys remain fully engaged and on task during lessons. The achievement of students with special educational needs is mostly appropriate for their abilities and considering their prior achievements. Students with special needs make good progress, especially when supported in class or taught in supported study groups. The school's targets for GCSE performance are based upon predicted grades calculated from results of testing in Year 8, further testing students on entry to the school and the use of a range of nationally standardised assessment programmes. Students are set individual targets that are realistic to achieve. The targets are appropriate and are having a positive effect on raising students' achievement. Overall levels of attainment are satisfactory. In some subjects such as science, art and physical education, achievement is good. Overall, the lower attaining students, including those with special needs achieve well. In some subjects, for example, English, the higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged to ensure they achieve the highest grade. In some other subjects; it is the average attaining students who underachieve. The school is confident that the procedures for setting individual student targets will ensure that more students achieve at a higher level.

### **Sixth Form**

14. A level results in 1999 across a range of 19 subjects, were above average, giving an A levels points score significantly better than the national average. At 23.1, points, this figure compared very favourably both with the national average of 17.6, and with the school's performance in the two previous years, when the points score stood at 16.2 and 16.4. This commendable improvement in A-level performance was matched by a high number of distinctions at GNVQ Advanced Level in the different disciplines involved.
15. In the English GCE level examinations, there has been a steady rise over the

last three years in the proportion of students attaining the higher A and B grade passes. In 1999, there was a significant rise in the proportion of students gaining A and B grades. The percentage of students attaining the higher grades and the percentage achieving a pass grade in 1999 was below the national average of 1998. Inspection evidence reflects the range of student attainment on the Advanced level course and by the end of the key stage attainment is in-line with national expectations.

16. Student attainment in mathematics is above national norms both for those gaining A and B, and A to E grades. There has been consistent improvement over the last five years and this year's cohort is on-line to match previously high standards. For the students studying vocational courses their numeracy skills are improving and approaching appropriate levels.
17. All four sciences are offered at level. Group sizes have increased and results improved since 1997. Physics and geology results are above national averages, chemistry is in-line and biology results are below average. However, results in chemistry and biology, whilst lower than physics, represent good achievement for the students who obtained grades in excess of those predicted for them, based on prior attainment.

### **Literacy**

18. The school has recognised the need to improve attainment in literacy. A particular strength is the development of speaking and listening skills, with most students raising their level of attainment to well above the national average by the end of Year 11. Listening skills are particularly well developed. Most students talk confidently and fluently in Key Stage 3, and these skills are well developed in Key Stage 4, where most students are able to order their thoughts and assemble a convincing argument. By the end of Year 11, students' attainment in reading is in-line with the national expectation. The reading strategy adopted has many good features but does not ensure that all students make adequate progress in developing reading skills throughout Years 9 and 10. The quality of writing throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 is below national expectations. The teaching of writing has many strengths. The principal reason for the fall in standards by the end of Key Stage 4 is the slow progress in the development of the basic skills of grammar, spelling and punctuation of all but the higher attaining students. The failure to provide all students with a progressive and continuous programme in the basic skills throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 (Key Stage 3) means the average and lower attaining students become increasingly disadvantaged as they progress through the school and this affects the progress of boys more than that of girls.

### **Numeracy**

19. The students use their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics across the curriculum. Skills of calculating, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division are good, especially among the higher attainers. The overall picture is satisfactory. The situation could be enhanced and made more effective if there was a whole-school policy on numeracy to help teachers avoid duplication of effort and ensure a consistent approach across all subjects.

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

20. The students' overall attitudes to the school are very good and a strength of the school. This compares very well with the judgement made at the previous inspection. Enthusiasm for the school at all key stages is very good and despite the long distances that some students have to travel most are invariably very keen and eager to come to school.
21. The students show very high standards of interest and involvement in all activities. This was most evident from the various, individual interviews that inspectors carried out with students from all year groups. This interest and involvement is not only in normal curriculum subjects such as the discussion on 'Capital Punishment' in a religious education lesson or during personal and social education lessons on the evils of alcohol but also in, for example, the school's swing band or its Study Club. The majority of students concentrate very well in all lessons and on whatever else they are doing.
22. Behaviour in classes and generally around the school is also very good; a strength of the school and again compares favourably with the last inspection. The very orderly movement of students between class lessons and their personal discipline when joining and leaving school, getting off and onto buses, is excellent and has to be commended in such a large school. The absence of oppressive behaviour, bullying, sexism or racism in the school is a notable feature. During the school year prior to the inspection the school has had eleven fixed period pupil exclusions and one permanent one.
23. The personal development of students and their relationships with each other and with their teachers and other adults are very good and yet a further strength of the school. The last inspection described the school's provision for personal, social and health education as excellent and this is still very much in evidence. The students are personally well aware of the impact of their actions on others. They respect each other's views and are polite to each other. It was most noticeable the numbers of students who stood aside and opened doors for visitors, staff and even their own peers.
24. The majority of students in the school show a great deal of initiative and have a good grasp of their personal responsibility in growing up as decent citizens within a difficult and sometimes confusing world. The class/year student councils are democratically elected by all students and from each year one student is elected to sit on the school council. The sixth form students act as 'buddies' to middle school students joining in September and parents comment on how well these students arrange and control the induction evenings for new parents and students. During one late afternoon of the inspection, several primary students who were forced to change buses at the school, in order to get home, appeared a little lost on alighting. A group of senior girls stepped forward, put their arms around them and guided them to the school building to wait for the next bus. In addition, sixth form boys act as guides onto the buses and monitors on behaviour whilst travelling.
25. Attendance at the school is satisfactory and compares well with the sound judgement reached at the last inspection. The school's attendance figures are in-line with national averages and the school has no unexplained unauthorised absences. The majority of students arrive at school and into classes on time. The vast majority of lessons commence promptly.



## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The quality of teaching was sound or better in 172 of the 177 lessons observed. This included 70 per cent of the lessons when teaching was judged as good or better. In about 30 per cent of the lessons teaching was very good and in three lessons it was excellent. Consequently, only in a few lessons was the teaching unsatisfactory. Overall, this represents a good profile for teaching and an improvement since the last inspection when about 90 per cent of the teaching was judged as satisfactory or better, including one-third good and one-fifth very good. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, the profile of teaching is similarly sound but the incidence of unsatisfactory teaching is higher at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form teaching was consistently sound or better, about 80 per cent was judged as good and 40 per cent as very good. The profile of teaching is very good in the sixth form and reflects the high levels of attainment.
27. Despite the overall good profile of teaching there are still important issues for the school to address; for example, there are notable differences between individual teachers and subjects. There are examples of good and sound teaching to be found in many departments, but during the inspection teaching was consistently good or better in design technology, religious education and physical education. The school and parents should be encouraged by the overall good profile of teaching as this is an aspect of the school they highlighted before the inspection.
28. There was a high degree of correlation between the quality of teaching and how well students learn and make good progress, especially in acquiring new knowledge, developing skills and increasing their understanding. Although the teaching observed during the inspection was good, it is still not having a sufficient impact on promoting the progress of the lower and average ability students in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and information communication technology in Key Stage 3. Students' attainment in English and the other subjects that depend on a high level of reading, writing and spelling is disadvantaged by the below average level of literacy on entry to the school. The students' below average literacy skills adversely affect their success in public examinations. Consequently, the overall levels of attainment remain lower than expected for similar schools' averages, particularly at Key Stage 3 and to some extent at Key Stage 4.
29. While the lesson observations were mostly positive, the school is aware of the need to continue with its focus on developing the key skills of literacy and independent learning. The school is in the process of devising a whole-school policy for literacy that is soon to be implemented. During recent years there has been an increase in monitoring classroom practice and curriculum development and this is having a positive effect in some faculties on improving the quality of education and raising attainment.
30. There are several particular strengths evident in the teaching at each key stage. These include very good subject knowledge and teacher expertise, supportive relationships with the students, good use of support staff and resources and skilful management of the students. The relative weaknesses include teaching the basic skills of literacy at Key Stages 3 and 4, the choice of teaching strategies and methodology and in some subjects the planning in detail to meet

the needs of all students. Generally, teachers have a good understanding of the National Curriculum. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of curriculum issues were particularly effective in ensuring good learning and progress in English, mathematics, history, art, modern foreign languages, geography, music and physical education. In the sixth form and vocational subjects throughout the school teachers displayed a high level of expertise.

31. Teachers often use a wide range of teaching strategies to develop fully students' learning skills and understanding of the subject. However, in some science, drama, and modern foreign language lessons the range or choice of teaching methods was not always appropriate.
32. The expectations of teachers for students to achieve high standards of work, behave appropriately and show positive attitudes towards learning are high. In GNVQ lessons, the sixth form, study skills and supported study, science, religious education and physical education, expectations are consistently high. There are relative weaknesses in English (Key Stage 3), mathematics and information communication technology.
33. The quality of teachers' lesson planning is sound overall. Generally, lesson plans are appropriately referenced to group or individual student targets for achievement and progress. Many teachers give careful attention to the needs of the slowest learners and those with special needs. Teaching is enhanced by well qualified and conscientious support staff. Where students with special educational needs are supported in class, the teaching is usually good. The use of high quality individual education plans produced by the learning support department, has improved since the last inspection. However, the weekly lesson plans of some teachers do not sufficiently make clear how these will be incorporated and used, nor do they provide sufficient tasks which match individual student needs. Generally, there is sufficient differentiation in most lessons and this was enhanced by the collaborative planning of teachers and the support staff. However, in some English, design technology and geography lessons the tasks set did not adequately match students' needs and ability. In English the higher attaining students were not sufficiently challenged and this results in only a few students achieving the highest grade in GCSE examinations.
34. Policies and schemes of work have been developed for most subjects and are usually detailed and adequately reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum, with the exception of the use made of information communication technology across the curriculum.
35. Most teachers include how students' learning is to be assessed in their planning details. Assessment of students' progress is frequent and there is good practice in many departments. The school administers a range of standardised tests and the results of these together with department assessments assist in setting individual student targets. This aspect of assessment is an improvement since the last inspection. Notable very good practice is to be found in science and religious education. As a result of the target setting many students understand what they are doing and why, how well they have done and how they can improve. Assessment and target setting are making an impact in guiding teachers' future planning and raising students' achievements.

36. Mostly, teachers manage their classes well and plan a variety of activities, so students have opportunities to work individually and in groups. The students are motivated to work and consequently their attitudes to learning are very good. Students usually apply themselves well in lessons, work hard and at a good pace. They normally show an interest in the work and are able to sustain concentration. The learning resources centre is used well for independent learning and students are able to learn for themselves. The quality of independent work in the sixth form was particularly good. Throughout the school the students usually understand what is expected of them and get on with their work. Some of the unsatisfactory teaching is because lessons are not well organised and students are unclear about the learning outcomes to be achieved. In these lessons there was too much teacher explanation, tasks were not sufficiently interesting and time was not used to create an urgency to complete the activities.
37. Teachers get on well with their students and their support and encouragement helps to promote learning and progress. Homework is usually set in-line with the programme to reinforce and extend what students have learned in the lessons. The practice is variable among individual teachers, but the overall pattern confirms the parents' positive views.

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

38. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good overall with excellent provision in personal and social education, careers and vocational education and the contribution of the community. However there are relative weaknesses in the lack of strategies for teaching literacy, numeracy and information communication technology skills across the curriculum, and in some of the curricular links with partner middle schools.
39. The provision in Key Stage 3 is very good, meeting all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The only weaknesses are in provision of information communication technology across the curriculum, and fieldwork in geography.
40. The provision is broad and balanced in Key Stage 4. Students can take up to ten subjects to GCSE, two of them being option choices. A certificate of achievement qualification was introduced two years ago and has been expanded this year for a number of subjects. There is also a successful work-related programme for 28 students funded by Standard Fund 17. There is a shortfall in assessment and reporting in information communication technology and underdevelopment in the aspect of control in design and technology.
41. In the sixth form the provision is very good, although there is only a small module of religious education as part of core studies. Students are offered 20 A-Level courses, and vocational courses in business, health and social care, leisure and tourism, hospitality and catering, administration, art and engineering. There is also a range of enrichment courses and opportunities for community service. In Year 13 there is a general studies programme which leads to an additional A level for most students.
42. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is very good. Most

of the support for students with special needs is through in-class support from well qualified learning support assistants. In addition, the school provides a range of curriculum support options for students who need support for their learning, These include study skills and supported study sessions when basic literacy and numeracy skills are developed and students receive additional support for examination courses.

43. Although literacy and numeracy are taught in many subjects, the lack of policies and cross-curricular strategies means that there is no consistent overall focus on developing the relevant skills. As a result, learning opportunities are missed.
44. There is a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, many of them taking place in the dinner hour because a high proportion of students have transport difficulties after school. There are regular drama productions, a well-supported band, and a full range of sporting activities on both a personal and a competitive level. The school has a miniature 500 metre railway that is popular with students. Students studying for a NVQ in administration have recently represented the United Kingdom at a millennium conference in Denmark. There are annual successful foreign exchange visits arranged for students.
45. Students have the benefit of an excellent careers education programme in all key stages. This provides a range of effective learning experiences including work experience in Year 10 and the sixth form, with the support of a large number of local employers. There is also a first class programme of personal and social education across all key stages, delivered effectively by committed teachers. This includes sensitively prepared units about relationships and family life, and drug and alcohol misuse.
46. Links with partner middle schools are in place with a structure of meetings at different management levels. However, although there are some successful areas, in others these links have not yet forged sufficient support to ensure continuity and progression through Key Stage 3 in all areas of the curriculum.
47. The community makes an excellent contribution to the learning of the students through such initiatives as prizes presented by the French and German twinning committees for achievement in those languages. Also industrial mentors support the Year 10 work-related course and the vocational areas of sixth form programmes. Mock interviews are arranged through local businesses, Neighbourhood Engineers reinforce the work of relevant areas of the curriculum and there is wide community support and participation in the work experience provision.
48. Since the last report the curriculum time has been increased to meet recommendations. The curriculum requirements in Key Stage 4 information communication technology have been improved but there is still a shortfall in recording and reporting. The agreed syllabus in religious education is being taught in the time provided. The good range of provision in the sixth form has been increased, and the very good range of extra-curricular provision has been maintained, despite difficulties with school transport.

### **Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments**

49. The provision the school makes for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. These areas are a priority in the aims of the

school but it does not have a process for monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of its provision across curriculum subjects.

50. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Opportunities are given for discussion of beliefs and values particularly in religious education, personal and social education and drama but many opportunities are missed across the curriculum to give opportunities for quiet and reflection, for the exploration of feelings and for developing a sense of awe and wonder. Sixth form students run a Christian Union group once a week for younger students and a group of staff meet weekly to pray for the life of the school. There is a thought-provoking 'Thought for the Day' displayed in the sixth form area but in tutor groups little time is devoted to spiritual development. Students have a weekly assembly and these are worthwhile in their contribution to social development, a sense of belonging to the school and celebrating achievement. Insufficient time is given to make them of real significance. There is a lack of involvement of students taking these but the school receives good support from local clergy.
51. The provision the school makes for the moral development of students is very good. Staff provide excellent role models and reinforce moral standards in tutor groups and through the excellent personal and social education programme. Religious education and physical education make significant contributions in that they provide many opportunities for discussion of moral issues and teach students rules and the difference between right and wrong. Heads of Year and group tutors make a very significant contribution in the way they exercise strong, caring pastoral oversight of students. There is a good reward system to encourage good standards. The sex education programme is very good and the school has been acknowledged nationally for its comprehensive and sensitive approach to relationships.
52. Social development provision is excellent and a strength of the school. All subjects encourage students to work together and support one another. There are numerous opportunities for social interaction via the extra-curricular activities provided and these are a great success despite the bussing restrictions. Citizenship forms an integral part of the curriculum for students in geography, history and religious education. There are many opportunities for students to discuss social values such as urban development, population control and poverty. The 'Buddies' scheme linking 6th Form students with Year 9 students is very good and students in Years 10 and 11 are involved in good Community Service schemes with a number of areas of the local community. One noteworthy initiative involves links with Victoria School (a local special school) in the Kielder Challenge. These, together with the variety of fund-raising activities, effectively encourage students to develop a culture of caring for others. The school councils and prefects schemes give students opportunities to take responsibility for their school and its environment.

53. Provision for the cultural development of students is good but the multicultural dimension is underdeveloped. Art, modern foreign languages, English, music and religious education in particular make good contributions to the cultural development of students. They offer students the opportunities to investigate a number of cultures through a range of visits, literature and media. Geography and religious education include the study of other cultures as part of the basic curriculum but many areas of the curriculum miss opportunities to share in and come to understand the experiences of people from other cultures.
54. Although changes have been made since the last inspection, the school still does not meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

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

55. The school provides a very high level of care for its students. The procedures for child protection are very good and a strength of the school and they compare very well with the judgement of the last inspection. The school's named person is well trained and has ensured that all staff have been made well aware of their individual responsibilities. There is excellent liaison with social services and the local educational welfare officer. The school uses the local educational authority written policy and this is an integral part of its own health and safety policy. Case conferences are well attended by all interested parties and liaison with the police, where necessary, is efficient and caring. The school arranges regular meetings with the visiting educational psychologist, consultant child psychiatrist, school doctor and other relevant persons. All relevant documentation remains highly confidential and is stored securely.
56. The school's arrangements for ensuring the safety of its students are good and endorse the opinions of the previous inspection report. Although the school did not have an overall official health and safety risk assessment previous to September 1999, the health and safety representative is now evolving one and hopes to complete it by Easter of this year. The school has a very detailed and concise health and safety policy and all staff are aware of their relevant responsibilities. During the inspection very few health and safety concerns were noted. However, the school has now been made aware of loose electrical cables in the music room. School meals are cooked, served and consumed in very hygienic conditions. Overall, the school is a very safe place in which to work and be taught.
57. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are now very good. Such procedures have improved since the last inspection. Attendance sheets are marked both mornings and afternoons and are returned to the school office for computer processing. Previous sheets are bound and securely stored. Absences, particularly those of an unauthorized nature, are closely scrutinized by heads of year and the weekly, visiting educational welfare officer. All parents are made well aware of their relevant responsibilities. The school has a very effective lateness routine.
58. Procedures within the school for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating bullying are very good and are both strengths of the school. These procedures are self evident in the very positive behavioural attitudes of the students.

59. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting and via the questionnaires endorsed these opinions wholeheartedly. Students are well rewarded for good behaviour and general positive attitudes via credit certificates which accumulate through the year and form part of their Record of Achievement. They are also awarded periods of detention for antisocial attitudes. The school also ensures that the very positive role models demonstrated by the staff and the very high levels of efficient supervision go a long way to cementing relationships, within which, such very good behaviour can exist. Such procedures compare well with the previous inspection.
60. The school has excellent educational and personal support and guidance for its students and consequently this is a very significant strength of the school and exceeds the standards commented on at the last inspection. This is particularly noticeable in the school's very effective careers education and; for example, a good quality Year 10 Options booklet and sixth form brochure.
61. Although the school receives inconsistent curriculum data from its feeder schools it does now try to work more closely with these schools to determine students' attainment on entry. Overall, its procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are within themselves very good and an individual strength. From the moment that students arrive in the school a whole system of termly progress reviews are set up for each student and these are carefully commented upon by individual subject and extra-curricula teachers/tutors. However, information communication technology is not reviewed and this is a weakness of the system. The school has regular cognitive ability and national assessment tests. At the end of the academic year very detailed and precise annual reports are raised for each student and sent to parents. However, the school does not assess or record information communication technology at Key Stage 4. Heads of year stay with students from Year 9 through to Year 11. As a result, staff get to know their students well and this was something that parents commented on positively at the pre-inspection meeting.
62. The school's use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is generally good at all key stages and this area of the school has improved since the last inspection. The school now analyses performance data and the senior management team use this as part of the monitoring and review meetings that take place each year. The school has a sound written monitoring and evaluation policy.
63. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are also very good and another strength of the school. Teachers assess well, student targets are set and parents are very much involved. Where students are considered to require extra help they are assigned mentors on a one-to-one basis and are encouraged to attend the school's study group evening. This system has a significant effect on students with special educational needs.
64. The procedures that the school has for monitoring and supporting the personal development of its students is similarly very good and another of its many strengths. The school's personal, social and health policy is excellent. Every class receives at least one weekly session. The school is constantly attempting to improve its programme by adding to it in order to allow students to become good citizens when they leave school; for example, there are lessons on drugs, use of alcohol, bereavement and sex education. Progress is well assessed and

recorded in both the termly reviews and the annual report to parents. Personal problems are well reviewed via the school's monthly meetings of medical and psychiatric professional support.

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

65. The parents' views of the school are excellent. This is a significant strength of the school and an improvement upon even the favourable report of the last inspection. At the pre-inspection parents' meeting and from information forwarded via the questionnaire parents clearly endorsed this view.
66. The quality of information provided for parents by the school remains excellent within its own right. A meeting with sixth form students found that the students thought that their parents were continuously very well informed about what went on at the school. The school ensures that all parents receive an updated copy of its prospectus and an annual governors' report. The latter, currently, has minor omissions of which the school and governors are aware. In addition, parents are sent regular letters on issues such as: sporting events; trips out; curricular matters; changes in routines and many more eventualities which affect them or their children. The school newsletter is very informative for parents and very well compiled. Every term parents are sent their child's individual academic and personal progress report on which they are asked to comment. Parents are also advised on their children's target. Each year parents are invited to tutor evenings and subject consultation meetings. At the end of the academic year they receive a detailed and informative, written, academic student report. Recently a new home/school agreement for parents has been approved by the governors and procedures implemented.
67. The overall effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is good and makes a positive contribution to students' education. Although it is difficult for parents to come in and actually help, either academically or socially, in such a large school, there are many parental contributions. The school is never short of helpers on trips out and the school's very energetic Parent Teacher Friends' Association is constantly arranging social events and raising funds for the school. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning at home by enthusiastically helping with homework tasks, topics and projects. The overall impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is sound.

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

68. Overall, the quality of leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff is good. The headteacher, who is fully supported by a cohesive senior management team, has established a clear direction for the school that is appropriately focused on raising students' achievement. They have ensured that staff, students, parents and governors are aware of this priority. There is a shared commitment amongst staff to improve. They have also created a positive climate for change so that the school has the capacity to maintain the current high quality of education and make improvements in the future. The school has a set of aims and objectives that are centred on providing an equality of opportunity for all students. The school is successful in implementing its aims and ensures that the good relationships between staff and students support the educational and personal progress of all students. There has been good improvement made since the last inspection.



69. The school has a clear management structure with appropriate systems and levels of delegation for the specified roles. The work of all academic and pastoral managers is supported through a structure of meetings that ensures good communication. Job descriptions have been well thought out to match the school's current priorities. An effective appraisal structure has been established to discuss and negotiate both individual staff targets and areas for department and whole-school development. The school is well placed to meet forthcoming legislation on performance management requirements. The quality of middle managers is variable. Some are extremely effective and efficient and have ensured excellent improvements have taken place within their faculties. In some faculties the standards achieved have not kept pace with either national improvements or elsewhere in the school; others have not fully grasped the extent of their management responsibilities and improvements in students' attainment and faculty management have not been secured. The management of students with special educational needs, the sixth form, science, physical education, religious education and the pastoral system is of a very high quality.
70. The governors are fully aware of their responsibilities to meet all statutory requirements and the overall performance of the school. With the exception of not complying to the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship and ensuring the full implementation of the National Curriculum for information communication technology the governors fulfil all statutory requirements. The governing body has a strategic view of the school's development and many members are gaining in confidence with regard to fulfilling their role. They are committed to the school's improvement and work hard in a well-organised committee structure to ensure continuous development. The governors are well informed about the school's successes and areas for development, mostly from members of the senior management team who attend all governor meetings. Currently, there is an over-dependence on the school to provide the governors with evaluations of the school's development and progress. All governors are linked to a curriculum area and some regularly visit the school to observe lessons and talk with teachers. They report on their findings at committee meetings but the governing body needs to extend its independent strategies for reviewing the school. The governors maintain a close monitoring of finances and make informed decisions based on accurate budget information. Currently, the Chair of Governors is also the chair of the finance committee and this is not an appropriate deployment of roles and should be remedied as soon as possible.
71. The quality of development planning and the systems for monitoring and evaluation have improved significantly since the last inspection. Development planning is now longer term and incorporates whole-school priorities linked to department and faculty action plans. The development plan identifies appropriate targets based on an established cycle of review procedures and staff training needs, and includes financial implications. The plan also has success criteria to judge the effectiveness of its implementation but requires more detailed performance indicators in parts to judge the level of success and secure lasting developments. The plan is presented to governors for ratification but overall they play an insufficient role in shaping the direction of the school.
72. The school has worked hard to establish systems for monitoring and evaluating the work in school. Analysing students' performance data, regularly reviewing

the standards of work and monitoring the implementation of the school's policies are used to set realistic targets for improvement. Faculties have benefited from lesson observations and curriculum reviews by members of the senior management team. However, improvements within departments and between faculties has not been even. In some faculties improvement has been insufficient and standards have not improved. Monitoring and evaluation systems are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the points for action identified in the areas for improvement are always adequately implemented. This is an issue of which the school is aware.

73. The school's educational priorities are supported by careful financial management and planning. Both senior managers and governors are clear about the cost of developments and the identified targets in the development plan. Due to the level of development of budget by the local education authority the school is at an early stage of developing best value principles. However, there are clear procedures for securing the most cost-effective price for the purchase of large items and securing a competitive price for a contract. This was demonstrated by the recent purchase of a new suite of computers when the regular supplier was not used. Control and administration of finances is very good. Recent audit reports have been positive about the school's financial procedures. The headteacher and governors benefit from accurate and up-to-date financial statements as the accounting package used is linked directly to the local education authority central system. The sixth form is financially viable despite some examination options that operate with few students taking the course. The school has taken appropriate measures to plan for the forthcoming changes to the post-16 curriculum provision.
74. The school makes good use of specific grants for areas such as supporting students with special educational needs and providing a good work-related curriculum in Key Stage 4. Both teaching and non-teaching staff are deployed appropriately and this positively enhances the quality of students' learning.
75. The school can demonstrate that it progressively adds value to students' achievement as they move through the school. Attainment on entry in Year 9 is close to an average intake for comprehensive schools nationally. However, a significant number of higher attaining students attend local selective schools and consequently the Purbeck School has proportionally fewer higher attaining students than may be expected for a school of its size. By the time students reach the age of 16 their performance is in-line with national expectations. The deployment of staff makes good use of their experience and expertise and most of the teaching is good with a significant proportion that is very good. Overall, resources are adequate but there are some weaknesses in English and the use of information communication technology. These factors considered in relation to a cost per pupil that is much higher than average, indicate a good school which is providing satisfactory value for money.
76. The school has a sufficient number of teachers who are suitably qualified by training and experience to teach the National Curriculum and examination courses. Opportunities have been taken since the last inspection to appoint younger staff to the school and to increase the number of female staff with middle management responsibility. The amount of non-teaching staff is adequate. Although the number of technical and clerical assistants is below national figures, they give good support, and the amount of learning support for

students with special educational needs has been increased effectively.

77. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching is satisfactory overall. The school has adapted the appraisal process to embrace some of the principles of performance management in its monitoring system. Although still in its early stages, this process of classroom observation, review and target-setting is starting to influence the quality of teaching and learning and to identify some staff training needs. It still, however, lacks the necessary rigour and consistency to be fully effective in eliminating elements of unsatisfactory teaching.
78. Professional development and its management has improved considerably and is now good. Activities are broad-based and have formed the basis for the school's current application for the Investors in People award. There is now more emphasis on in-house activity in which faculties work together on aspects of whole-school development, such as middle management and literacy. Faculty and individual training plans are linked closely to school development and carefully costed, and all activities are formally evaluated. Non-teaching staff and support assistants have equal access to training. Newly qualified and newly appointed staff are supported very well. The induction programme is long-established and comprehensive, incorporating regular observation, meetings and review and is a major strength of staff management.
79. Accommodation is good, enhancing standards in physical education, drama, business studies, design technology and information communication technology. The site is clean, well maintained and well managed. There was no evidence of graffiti around the school. The school's strategic planning for development and enhancement, based on an Asset Management model and internal review, is very good. Issues identified in the last report have been addressed successfully in a programme of replacement and renewal. This includes the replacement of demountable buildings with a new mathematics block, the refurbishment of the exterior of a major teaching area, a rolling programme of window replacement and the creation of several new teaching spaces.
80. The school has successfully addressed resourcing issues identified in the last report. The learning resources centre has been considerably upgraded. It is accessible, inviting, well stocked and very popular. As a multimedia curriculum support it is having a major impact on the quality of resource-based learning and standards of information communication technology. Provision of information communication technology facilities throughout the school is much improved. In addition to the network in the learning resources centre there are now five networked computer suites around the school. Overall resource provision is adequate for need. Although some subjects are maintaining standards on limited resources, there are deficiencies affecting the quality of learning in Key Stage 4 English.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81. The school should now:

- (1) Improve the provision for teaching basic literacy skills by:**  
devising a detailed whole-school literacy policy and scheme of work;  
creating an assessment scheme to identify students' skills and knowledge of literacy skills;  
ensuring regular monitoring of the implementation of the policy and scheme by all departments;  
working with the middle schools to devise a structured programme for the development of Key Stage 3 Literacy.  
(paragraphs 18 43 88 93 94 143 145 148)
- (2) Ensure that monitoring and evaluation procedures are more rigorous by:**  
insisting that any action agreed is fully implemented;  
devising more detailed performance indicators to measure success and improvement;  
providing further staff development and training in monitoring techniques.  
(paragraphs 72 94 107 132 140 160)
- (3) Improve the effectiveness of middle management by:**  
sharing the good practice that exists in school;  
empowering staff through appropriate in-service training;  
publishing annually department and faculty performance targets together with the level of success achieved.  
(paragraphs 69 101 107 126 140 160)
- (3) Improve the cross-curricular provision for information communication Technology by:**  
producing detailed curriculum maps for each key stage;  
ensuring all subject schemes of work incorporate the skills and experiences to be covered;  
empowering staff through further in-service training;  
assessing and reporting on students' progress at each key stage.  
(paragraphs 39 115 128 148 150 152 165)

### Other less significant issues the school should incorporate into its action plan:

Devising a strategy to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum; (paragraphs 19 43 136)

Enhancing the quality of lesson planning to ensure the needs of all students are met; (paragraphs 33 90 139)

Improving the level of book resources for English at Key Stage 4; (paragraphs 94)

Providing a greater range of provision for multi-cultural education; (paragraphs 53)

Allocating more time for assemblies and involving students in them; (paragraphs 50 54)

Resolving the position for chair of finances on the governing body; (paragraph 70)

Governors to devise more independent strategies for monitoring improvements in school; (paragraph 70)

Offering more opportunities for fieldwork in Key Stage 3 geography; (paragraphs 39 140)

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

82. The sixth form is a very significant strength of the school. About 60 per cent of students stay on for their post-16 education, and the school has been very successful in providing an increasingly broad variety of options in recent years, for a wide ability range.
83. Students are generally admitted to advanced courses in the sixth form from an attainment level of 5 GCSE grade Cs or above. A level results in 1999 across a range of 19 subjects were above average, giving an A levels points score significantly better than the national average. At 23.1 points, this figure compared very favourably both with the national average of 17.6, and with the school's performance in the two previous years, when the points score stood at 16.2 and 16.4. This commendable improvement in A-level performance was matched by a high number of distinctions at GNVQ Advanced Level in the different disciplines involved. These included art and design, leisure and tourism, and health and social care. GNVQ Intermediate results were also good. In other exams; for example, RSA Text and Word-processing, where there were many distinctions, and from the several NVQ courses, standards were also high. In combination, these results in 1999 testify to the success of the school's strategic focus on raising attainment in the sixth form. They also represented very good levels of progress for students who took the various courses, many of whom had not attained the highest grades in their Year 11 examinations.
84. Attainment observed in the present sixth form is similarly high across the range of provision. Students of all capabilities, with very differing attainment levels, progress well in lessons, and across the sixth form. Attainment in lessons seen in post-16 classes is relatively higher than that in the rest of the school when judged against the expectations for different courses. In many A level classes; for example, in religious education and mathematics, students' standards are very high indeed. In GNVQ groups; for example, in art and design, and in NVQ administration, attainment seen was likewise much higher than average. In a Year 13 general studies lesson following a talk from Neighbourhood Engineers, the level of discussion and argument, about 'Space' and the efficacy of research and exploration, was commendably high. The employers involved in the vocational courses' work placements speak very highly of the students' performance in the workplace, to the extent where several offer appointments.
85. A major factor in the continuing success of the sixth form is the very good quality of teaching observed across subjects. No teaching seen was less than satisfactory, and most was good or very good. Teaching is significantly better in the sixth form than elsewhere in the school. This very strong profile is underpinned by strengths in all the factors which lead to successful learning, and is found in all departments. In summary, teachers are very well informed about their academic subjects, transmitting this knowledge and understanding very effectively to students. Expectations are very high, with most lessons showing a level of mature interaction between students and teachers which combines a rigour in teaching and learning with a sense of enjoyment. Students often integrate the vocational and A level courses on offer, and one very commendable 'flavour' of the whole sixth form is the parity of respect for and understanding of both aspects of students' curriculum on the part of many teachers who teach both with equal rigour. Core skills such as information communication technology and communication are taught to all students and

these contribute very usefully to students' experience and lead to clear improvement in standards. The school is significantly further ahead in its sixth form planning for the integration of these skills into A level programmes than many other schools. Teachers' assessment of students A level and vocational work is also very good. Students get extremely helpful feedback from teachers as both oral and written comments, with clear advice on how to improve work. Many examples of this were seen across subjects, with constant reference made in GNVQ courses about what assessors are looking for in judging distinctions, and in A level, about the features which will generate a higher grade.

86. The exceptional range of courses provided offers students a rich range of opportunities within their curriculum. The A-level and vocational options, and combinations of these, match the aspirations of almost any student. The school seeks to provide for most realistic demands, and is running several courses with small numbers of students, as well as some with very large numbers. While this does lead to some 'clashes' on students' timetables, curriculum arrangements are commendably flexible, and no student seems disadvantaged by these. An example of the effective management of this potential complication is in GNVQ Art and Design, where some A level students cannot all attend the whole timetabled lesson, so use studios at other times. A good feature of the curriculum is its flexibility in these matters, with both staff and students readily accepting these complexities, and managing them very well. This creates an atmosphere of mature versatility between staff and students which leads to good use of staff time, and very effective use of the school's other resources.
87. In addition to their chosen subjects, students' sixth form curriculum is enriched very well through a range of provisions. These additions include a general studies programme in Year 13, which all students attend, and from which almost all take the A level examination. Results in this show the average spread of attainment, and for a few students, this additional A level has been the deciding factor in accessing their desired university place if their other A-level results have fallen somewhat short of expectations. This general studies programme also includes modules which relate to religious education, so that the school conforms with locally agreed requirements in this regard. Year 12 also have a range of enrichment options, including sports, work experience and community service. In Year 12, students are also provided with an opportunity to resit core subjects for GCSE if their grade was lower than they had hoped. The inclusion of more work-related foreign language learning would further enhance the range of provision for sixth formers. Careers education is good, and very good support and guidance are included in students' curriculum to prepare them for the options available when they leave the school. Formal assessment and reporting procedures relating to students' progress in their studies is very good, with two interim summaries annually, and a detailed end-of-year report summarising their standards. When any concern over a student's progress or attitudes arises, an immediate 'concern-sweep' is instigated, where all staff involved can contribute to an overall picture of the student's progress so that senior staff can act on the information.

88. Overall, spending on sixth form creates an efficient, cost-effective provision. Measurable outcomes such as examination results have improved greatly of late; sixth formers enjoy good quality accommodation now, with very good social areas and the use of rooms in subject areas, as well as the sixth form area. Students provide very good role models for the rest of the school, being mature and enthusiastic about their studies. The 'buddy' system with Year 9 students is a very good mechanism for getting students involved with the lower school. This system is well regarded and highly effective, indicating that students could usefully be given extended opportunities of this kind to contribute more to whole-school life, by organising their own and other years' assemblies for example. When they do organise events of this kind, their 'Prom' ball, for example, these events are very successful. Many examples exist where sixth formers prove to be very good ambassadors for the school; for example, through the EU Youth in Europe scheme, where several students gained international exposure with articles they recently wrote for the *Challenges* magazine.
89. Other sixth form involvement include very useful work with the newly opened local community IT centre and this list could be very extensive. Without exception, the inspection team found sixth formers to be confident, articulate and helpful, willing to discuss work and other aspects of the school in depth, and to be entirely supportive of what the school had provided for them. Less measurable, but equally positive outcomes of sixth form provision are impressively varied, and the degree of quiet modesty with which some students and staff view these are a testimony to the very good management of this aspect of the school, and to its success.

## **COMMUNITY**

90. Community links are playing an increasing role in the educational provision of the school for its students. Work experience, challenging vocational programmes, links with business and an extensive community education programme all serve to enhance the contribution towards students' learning. Thirty students from Years 10 and 11 participate in an internally certificated programme of community service. The school works successfully with the local Youth Service on the work related course it offers to students. In addition the school has established good links with Wareham Ahead, who administrate the national 'small towns regeneration budget'.
91. The outstanding sports facilities, which are a direct partnership with the community, are an example of effective community education. Members of the public utilise the facilities during the school day, during evenings, weekends and holiday periods. Vocational and examination programmes are available during the evenings and many peoples take advantage of these courses to extend their learning opportunities. Discussions to further integrate the provision and extend the facilities are being undertaken.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	177
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	69

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	28	41	27	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll		Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll		1155
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		90

Special educational needs		Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		24
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		229

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	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	8.7	School data	0.2

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	171	131	302

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	118	128
	Girls	90	79	78
	Total	176	197	206
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (69)	66 (59)	69 (65)
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (44)	38 (36)	29 (32)
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	129	117	125
	Girls	112	86	89
	Total	241	203	214
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (74)	66 (62)	72 (58)
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (36)	38 (32)	56 (31)
	National	31	37	28

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	145	129	274

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	63	140	142
	Girls	66	122	123
	Total	129	262	265
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	47.3 (47.8)	95.6 (94.1)	98.8 (98.9)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40.2 (39.7)
	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	N/A	N/A
	National	N/A	N/A

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	36	37

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	21.6	24.6	23.1 (16.4)	0.5	4.7	2.3 (2.0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	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	N/A	N/A
	National	N/A	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	N/A	N/A
	National	N/A	N/A

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	891
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	76
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	361

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	6	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2,729,638
Total expenditure	2,753,491
Expenditure per pupil	2,463
Balance brought forward from previous year	-56,017
Balance carried forward to next year	-79,870

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1155
Number of questionnaires returned	182

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	58	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	49	4	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good	27	55	4	1	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	49	8	1	3
The teaching is good.	34	55	3	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	41	13	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	33	3	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	34	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	37	45	13	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	38	51	2	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	52	3	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	41	5	2	13

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents were keen to emphasise the positive elements of the school explaining: many of the teachers at The Purbeck choose to send their own children to the school; the children are very happy at school and keen to become involved in the life of the school; many of the students enjoyed Physical education, especially representing the school in fixtures.

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

### **ENGLISH**

92. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests for 14 year olds, the proportion achieving the national average (Level 5) and the higher Level 6, was close to the national average. There has been a decline in the percentage of students reaching these grades over the past three years and the school results have fallen to below the average for similar schools. Although boys' attainment in these tests is below that of the girls, the difference is similar to the difference nationally. Inspection evidence reflects these results and, by the age of 14, attainment is in-line with national expectations.
93. In the 1999 GCSE English Language and Literature examinations, the school has reversed the downward trend of the last three years. The proportion of students achieving the higher A\*-C grade passes is below the national expectation, but this year, the GCSE Language results are in-line with other similar schools. The performance of boys in both these examinations is significantly lower than that of the girls, but the gap has narrowed over three years. Inspection evidence reflects these results, with attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in-line with national expectations.
94. There are effective strategies in place for supporting students with special educational needs, combining specialist and mainstream class provision. Students' needs are accurately identified and provision is appropriate. Students make particularly good progress in Year 9 and students' attainment is commensurate with their ability by the end of Year 11.
95. In the GCE Advanced level examinations, there has been a steady rise over the last three years in the proportion of students attaining the higher A and B grade passes. In 1999, there was a significant rise in the proportion of students gaining A and B grades. The percentage of students attaining the higher grades and the percentage achieving a pass grade in 1999 was below the national average of 1998. Inspection evidence reflects the range of student attainment on the Advanced level course and by the end of the key stage attainment is in-line with national expectations.
96. A particular strength is the development of speaking and listening skills, with most students raising their level of attainment to well above the national average by the end of Year 11. Listening skills are particularly well developed; students listen attentively and show respect for other points of view. Most students talk confidently and fluently in Key Stage 3, and these skills are well developed in Key Stage 4, where most students are able to order their thoughts and assemble a convincing argument. Much of this good progress is a reflection of good teaching, for example, students research and practice structuring speeches for different audiences, are provided with regular opportunities for general class discussion, and with their teachers, assess the development of their own speaking and listening skills. A weakness is the tendency in some classes for boys to dominate discussion.
97. By the end of Year 11, students' attainment in reading is in-line with the national

expectation. The reading strategy adopted has many good features but does not ensure all students make adequate progress in developing reading skills throughout Years 9 and 10; for example, Year 9 students carry a reading book at all times, read twice a week in tutor periods and are effectively supported and motivated by the sixth form 'Buddy' system. The strategy is particularly effective for higher attaining students, who join the school as competent readers and for students with special needs, for whom individual and group help is available. It does not sufficiently support the average and lower attaining students, particularly the boys, for whom monitoring and assessment procedures are inadequate; for example, the current procedures neither ensure students choose books appropriate for their attainment level nor do they ensure students understand and appreciate the books they are reading.

98. The quality of writing throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 is below national expectations. The teaching of writing has many strengths; for example, there is a good balance between writing across a range of forms and literary appreciation. The use of drafting and re-drafting, often with the opportunity to word-process text, is effective in improving the writing skills, particularly of high and average attaining students. A strength is the attention teachers place on the development of vocabulary throughout the school. The principal reason for the fall in standards by the end of Key Stage 4 is the slow progress in the development of the basic skills of grammar, spelling and punctuation of all but the higher attaining students. The failure to provide all students with a progressive and continuous programme in the basic skills throughout Key Stage 3 means the average and lower attaining students become increasingly disadvantaged as they progress through the school and this affects the progress of boys more than that of girls. The quality of writing in the sixth form is in-line with national expectations. More generally, students' literacy skills in oracy, reading and writing are sufficient to sustain good progress in learning in other subjects.
99. The quality of teaching and the progress students make in their learning is at least satisfactory and is good in three-fifths of lessons across all key stages. There is some very good teaching. Teaching is sound in Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Particular strengths are teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and the careful planning of lessons with clearly explained lesson objectives. An example is the very good teaching of a poem in Year 10, where the teacher explained the imagery through a series of visual demonstrations and followed this with a short video of the poet discussing the germ of the poem. The expertise and the good relationships established in this lesson are a feature of most of the teaching throughout the department. This provides students with the confidence to ask questions and to take risks in discussion, which enhances their learning. Students generally enjoy English lessons and rise to the challenges provided for them.
100. Less satisfactory is the provision of a range of activities tailored to the needs of the different ability levels within classes. Most lessons are aimed towards students of average ability, with inadequate support provided for lower attaining students, and insufficient extension work for the most able. The additional support provided for students with special educational needs ensures that they generally make progress commensurate with their ability, but this is not the case for the most able students; for example, only seven students obtained the highest grades in the GCSE Language and Literature examinations in 1999.

101. The good behaviour and positive attitudes to work of most students is a factor in their good progress. Students are generally well motivated, co-operate well together in group and paired activities and enter fully into class discussion. An example of students' mature attitude to learning is their responsible use of the information communication technology facilities in the Learning Resource Centre. Although behaviour is satisfactory overall, there are some isolated instances of mildly disruptive behaviour in some Year 9 classes and there is some attention seeking in Year 11 classes by some boys.
102. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and provides all students with equal opportunities. Its strengths are the wide range of literature studied throughout the school and the emphasis on developing an appropriate vocabulary. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities provided and these support and complement the curriculum; for example, the extensive range of theatre visits. Literature is used to good effect in providing students with opportunities to reflect upon spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of their personal development; for example, the examination of the values of love and marriage or the understanding of environmental issues. In Year 9, the development of the word-processing element of the information communication technology curriculum is effectively integrated into the teaching of English.
103. Although the curriculum provided is broad and balanced in its concept, there is a lack of balance within its delivery. The teaching of basic skills is mainly through drafting and redrafting of students' work and this is only partially successful. The lack of a continuous and progressive programme for teaching the basic skills across all years in Key Stage 3 is a key factor inhibiting attainment in Key Stage 4. Homework is set and marked regularly. It is a valuable extension of the curriculum. In most cases the same homework is set for all students and the opportunity to further develop and extend the thinking of the highest attaining students is lost.
104. The management of the department is sound. There are clear and appropriate priorities for further development; for example, the introduction of a number of strategies to improve the attainment of boys. An improvement since the previous inspection is the introduction of a programme for monitoring teaching. Monitoring within the department lacks rigour and there is inconsistency of practice between classes. The department has also begun to moderate standards across the department and staff have worked hard to develop assessment procedures across the key stages and these are enabling teachers to set targets. However, target setting is not yet based on a close identification of the skills and knowledge individuals and groups require for standards to be raised. This inadequacy is reflected in the mismatch this year between teachers' assessments and the end of Key Stage 3 test results. The inadequacy in funding the department, raised in the previous report, remains. Despite recently increased funding each student does not have a copy of the GCSE Literature textbook. The sharing of these texts amongst classes means that teaching and learning is, to an extent, led by resources rather than the educational needs of students. There is limited funding allocated for text books in the sixth form and students often prefer to buy their own.

## **Drama**

105. By the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment is above the national expectation. Students are able to create roles and begin to develop aspects of characterisation. Students create scenes in pairs and as a whole class and work co-operatively and creatively together; for example, students created a public meeting with a range of key characters protesting about a recent event involving a group of teenagers.
106. In the GCSE drama examinations, the proportion of students achieving A\*- C grades has remained well above the national average for the past three years, although the percentage fell in 1999. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment in Year 11 this year is lower than the public examination results of last year. The principal reason for this is the wide variation in attainment levels in Year 11. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is in-line with, rather than above, national expectations.
107. For the second year running, all the students entered for the GCE Advanced Level theatre studies examination passed. In 1998, the proportion of students attaining the higher A and B grade passes was above the national average. In 1999, there was a substantial improvement in the proportion of students attaining higher grades, although from a smaller entry. By the end of the key stage, attainment reflects the examination results and is above the national expectation.
108. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 9 and 10 and very good in the sixth form. In Year 11, there is a variation in the quality of teaching and learning between good and unsatisfactory, but overall it is sound. A particular strength is teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject; for example, in the sixth form, where teachers' expertise enables students to discuss the social and historical context of a play from their own research. In Years 9 and 10, lessons are carefully planned with interesting and appropriate activities; for example, beginning lessons with individual exercises and moving on through paired activities to group work. Generally, teachers establish good relationships with students and this provides the security and confidence for students to explore ideas through roleplay. Where lessons are unsatisfactory, there is a lack of focus for groups in the preparation of their improvisations. In some classes, poor attendance and poorly motivated students hamper attainment. A general weakness is a lack of opportunities for class and self-evaluation of performance and the inconsistent completion of drama notebooks.
109. The behaviour and attitudes to work of most students are positive and enhance students' learning. In Years 9 and 10, students try hard, generally maintain good levels of concentration and enjoy drama. Similarly, in the sixth form, students are well motivated. They work particularly well together in teams, supporting and encouraging each other. There is a high level of personal and group commitment. In Year 11, most students try hard in their group activities and are keen to succeed, but the lack of commitment of a few students affects the overall level of attainment in some classes.



110. The drama curriculum is generally broad and well balanced and provides equal opportunities for all students. The department recognises the need for a revision of the schemes of work in Year 9 and in Key Stage 4. There is a lack of a systematic programme to ensure the basic drama skills are delivered consistently across Year 9 classes and there is an inadequate outline scheme which ensures the GCSE requirements are met within the given timescale. The school has a long tradition of producing musicals and last year the production was 'West Side Story'. There are changes in staffing which have currently limited extra-curricular activities to the sixth form, where there have been a number of visits to the theatre and student performances of their practical examination work. Students are provided with good opportunities to discuss and act out issues and concerns, which affect them. There are good opportunities to reflect the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of their personal development; for example, in the discussion of women's role in society or the social and moral behaviour of teenagers at a disco.
111. The leadership of the department is satisfactory but there are organisational difficulties. With only one full-time teacher of drama, the department relies heavily up on teachers with priorities elsewhere. This makes attendance at some meetings problematic. As a consequence there are some inconsistent practices throughout the department; for example, in the procedures for the delivery and development of the curriculum and in the monitoring and assessing of students' work. The quality and quantity of accommodation is very good. The resources to mount full-scale productions are limited and some of the lighting and sound equipment is inadequate.

## **MATHEMATICS**

112. Students' attainment in the National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, was in-line with the national average for 1999 both for students achieving Level 5 or better and for those achieving Level 6 or more. When compared with the average points score obtained by students from similar schools results were below average. Boys and girls achieved similar standards. Mathematics results for 1999 were less good than those achieved in science but better than those for English. Over the years 1996 to 1999 the Key Stage 3 results were close to the national average. By the age of 14 higher achieving students have a good grasp of how to use Pythagoras' theorem to solve right angled triangles and can calculate increase, decrease, profit and loss as percentages. Average attainers know their multiplication tables and can scale figures up and down with an understanding of centre of enlargement and scale factor. Lower attaining students can measure accurately to within a millimetre for length and a degree for turn. They can draw figures made from compounded rectangles and most can find their area and perimeter by counting unit squares. Students with special needs attain well in relation to their varying abilities and prior attainment. Where any substantial difficulties exist for lower attaining students they are related more to a lack of literacy rather than numeracy skills.

113. Results for mathematics in the 1999 GCSE exams are also broadly similar to the national average. As at Key Stage 3, students' results in mathematics are better than those in English but lower than science. When compared with students from similar schools the number of students achieving A\*-C is broadly average. Higher attaining students in Year 11 can solve equations such as  $\frac{4}{x} + \frac{5}{x} = 4\frac{1}{2}$ , and  $\frac{(3x+5)}{6} = 4\frac{1}{3}$ . They can also recognise that a straight line on a velocity time graph represents constant acceleration. Average attaining students can do successful work with the sine and cosine rule and solve problems involving tangents of a circle and the angle in the alternate segment of a circle. Lower attaining students can round numbers to two significant figures and to the nearest decimal place. They can also use a calculator competently to find the area and circumference of a circle. As at Key Stage 3 those with special educational needs seen during the inspection in mathematics lessons, were doing well in relation to their ability, particularly when assisted by very effective learning support assistants.
114. In the sixth form, student attainment is above national norms both for those gaining A and B, and A to E grades. There has been consistent improvement over the last five years and this year's cohort is on-line to match previous high standards. For the students studying vocational courses their numeracy skills are improving and approaching appropriate levels.
115. In the last inspection the main issue identified for the department was to raise the achievement of lower attaining students at Key Stage 3. The department has responded to this by rewriting the schemes of work and introducing a new set of course texts that provide for a wider range of ability. The range of extra course materials has also been substantially improved. The other main issue concerned the accommodation in which the department was housed. This situation is now remedied. There is a new purpose built block for mathematics consisting of six teaching rooms, community space and a networked computer provision with eleven computers. This provides a clean, well presented environment that enhances the learning provision for the students.
116. The teaching seen during the inspection was good at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. In no lesson was the teaching unsatisfactory. The best lessons seen were taught by teachers who were totally on top of their subject, well prepared, delivered at pace and packed their lessons with examples drawn from real life. An excellent example was a lesson on sampling and hypothesis testing taught to some Year 12 students. The teacher made quite difficult concepts seem straightforward whilst maintaining a high level of rigour so that the students found the material accessible, interesting and enjoyable. In this, as in almost every lesson seen at all key stages, the students' positive attitudes to their work enhanced their capacity to learn. Whilst not unsatisfactory, some lessons lacked the pace and rigour associated with this example. One such was a Year 9 lesson on the area of quadrilaterals of different sorts. This, although prefaced by a bright and breezy introduction, lacked the variety, rigour and pace of more successful lessons.

117. The teaching skills demonstrated by the majority of the department represent a strength in their quest to raise standards. This is particularly true for the teaching at GCE Advanced level. The challenge for the head of department and his team is to ensure that all of the teachers attain the same high standards. Marking, which is thoroughly and constructively used by many of the teachers needs to be of a consistently high quality. The same is true for subject knowledge and lesson preparation. A good start has been made in this respect by the introduction of comprehensive monitoring procedures for all aspects of the teachers' day-to-day work including regular lesson observation. Currently these procedures lack sufficient rigour and could be enhanced if extended to allow for peer observation to enable sharing of good practice. It is also essential that the procedures are followed through robustly to ensure adherence to departmental policies, particularly with regard to marking and assessment.
118. There are regular half-termly testing arrangements which are informing setting arrangements and motivating students to improve. These, together with the other assessment procedures employed, should be shared with students, particularly at Key Stage 3, as National Curriculum or GCSE gradings. This will enable them to understand more clearly the level at which they are working and that to which they can aspire.
119. There is much that is satisfactory to be seen in the work of the mathematics department. Whilst there is work to be done, especially raising attainment in Key Stages 3 and 4 and numeracy across the curriculum, the capacity to achieve is evident.

### **Numeracy**

120. The students use their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics across the curriculum well. Skills of calculating using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division are good among the higher attainers. In science, for example, they build on skills developed in Year 9 to display growing confidence in using formulae to solve problems throughout Key Stage 4. They present experimental data using graphs. Higher attaining students recognise the need for the use of line graphs rather than bar charts or histograms to represent continuous data. A very good lesson was seen in geography where the students, studying the relationship between Gross National Product and Birth Rate showed facility and understanding drawing scatter graphs. In this lesson they learned the difference between negative, positive and zero correlation. In art they showed an appreciation of proportion using measuring pots for work with the kiln. In design technology they display well developed weighing and measuring skills and use nets to design packaging involving the production of a variety of geometrical shapes. Music students use an understanding of number when working on sequence, pattern, inversion, key structure and chord patterns.
121. The overall picture therefore is positive. The situation could, however, be enhanced and made more effective if there was a whole-school policy on numeracy to help teachers avoid duplication of effort and ensure a consistent approach across all subjects.

## SCIENCE

122. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were well above national comparisons at the average level of attainment for 14 year olds. More than the average number of students attained higher levels in the tests. Overall standards have been similar since 1997 but there is an upward trend at the higher than average levels. The performance of girls was significantly below that of boys whose results far exceeded national comparisons. The school's results for science are better than those for English and mathematics and are very good when compared with results for similar schools. The agreement with the middle school about which parts of the Programme of Study should be taught in each year group helps to clarify the focus for Year 9. The short time before tests take place is well used to raise attainment of students through brisk teaching and challenging targets set for students. There is no significant variation in achievement in biology, chemistry and physics and students make some good links across the sciences; for example, applying what they know about sound waves to explaining the structure and function of the ear. Students use numeracy skills well. They measure accurately and record their observations using line graphs and know why these are best for recording continuous variables such as temperature changes whereas block graphs are used to record information such as numbers of students with a particular eye colour. Students in top sets use good extended writing to report their observations. Literacy skills of many students are poor but their writing is guided by the use of writing frames and key words.
123. All students are entered for GCSE double award science. There has been an upward trend in results since 1996 and in 1999 they reached national averages. Improvement in the performance of boys has been very good. Their results were close to those for girls in 1999. Science results are close to English and above those of mathematics. By the age of 16 students have a good grasp of basic principles of science. The quality of investigatory work is good across all abilities. Higher attainers look at the effects of particle size, temperature and concentration when investigating rates of reaction between a solid and an acid. They know how to ensure that tests are fair. They draw accurate graphs and record and evaluate their results well, understanding where errors might have an impact on reliability. Lower attaining students explain variations when two factors are changed and their reports are accurate, with good diagrams to clarify their work.
124. All four sciences are offered at Advanced level. Groups sizes have increased and results improved since 1997. Physics and geology results are above national averages, chemistry is in-line and biology results are below average. However, results in chemistry and biology, whilst lower than physics and geology represent good achievement for the students who obtained grades in excess of those predicted for them, based on prior attainment. A particular strength of all A level students is their skill at note taking which is well taught through Key Stage 4. They record salient points during lessons then write more extensively at home and in the process they consolidate knowledge and understanding and make good revision records for later use. The overall standard of students' work in science is good.

125. Since the previous inspection there have been many improvements. In 1994 National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 3 were below average and now they are well above. Teaching is good whereas previously a third of that seen was not satisfactory. The teaching of sixth form lessons was described as 'spoon feeding' and is now challenging and almost always very good. One weakness, which remains, is the use of information communication technology to support learning in science. Although data-logging features as part of the statutory curriculum, students do not use CD-ROMS and the Internet in lessons because of a lack of resources. Many lessons observed during the inspection, such as those dealing with the solar system or radioactivity, would have benefited enormously from information communication technology support.
126. The quality of teaching is good overall. Very good lessons were seen in all key stages. Teachers are enthusiasts and engage the interests of students. Lessons tackle relevant issues such as those concerning the environment. The attitude of students is a positive one and the great majority want to learn. The high levels of teachers' specialist knowledge allow them to clarify difficult concepts through good exemplification. A strong feature in the teaching of science is the good academic discussion between teacher and students. This often begins as a result of questions posed by students, who continue to probe until they understand. Students struggling with the concept that redox reactions produce electric current questioned the teacher who skillfully separated the concept into steps they could grasp. Year 9 students asked searching questions about the behaviour of planets and the sun and began to speculate with their teacher about the solar system at levels beyond their age group. Very good relationships, which give students the confidence to speak up when they do not understand, made for some very effective teaching and learning. Homework is set and marked regularly and well used by most students and teachers to consolidate what is learned in the classroom. The very few unsatisfactory lessons occurred where students were not sufficiently involved in the lesson because the teacher relied too much on their copying notes or reading texts which would be better set for homework. Only when teaching is unsatisfactory do students remain silent when they do not understand.
127. Leadership of the science department is excellent. The vision of continuous improvement, which has made science a strength of the school, is supported by very effective systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. The head of faculty has raised the expectations of both teachers and students. Students' attainment and progress is closely monitored and each knows his or her own target level or grade and knows also the extent to which targets are met or exceeded. GCSE results have improved rapidly despite a below average amount of time being given to the subject in Key Stage 4. There are too few laboratory technicians but the efficiency and quality of their work is an important factor in the department's success. The good quality of overall provision of science has resulted in higher standards and the school's confidence in predicting further improvements.

## **ART**

128. At GCSE there has been a consistent rising trend over the last five years. In 1999, out of an entry of 85 students, 66 per cent achieved grades A\*-C in comparison with the national average of 61.2 per cent. The performance of girls

was close to the national average but that of boys exceeded it by ten per cent. Results at A-Level, over the last three years have been consistently above school and national figures. In 1999 100 per cent of students received grades A - D. The girls scored slightly higher than the boys.

129. From a scrutiny of students' work and lesson observation at both key stages and in the sixth form, attainment is above expectations. The majority of students are achieving the national standard and a significant minority are achieving above it.
130. In the sixth form, students make confident use of oils, pen and ink, pencil, gouache and acrylic paint. A wide range of experiences was on display: life-drawing, landscape, complex design work, self-portraits and still life. Students' skills in drawing and painting are well advanced and they are confident in the control of light and shade and balance in design and can adapt the styles of practising artists to inform their own work.
131. At Key Stage 4 students of all abilities are confident in the use of watercolour, acrylic and oil paint. They can blend colour subtly and are not afraid to use bold, powerful colours for effect. Their three Dimensional work is innovative and their drawing is completed accurately and carefully. They are able to talk fluently about their work and use the language of art effectively.
132. At Key Stage 3 all students are able to address the attainment targets with skill and confidence. They use their notebooks well to trace the development of their designs, particularly in three Dimensional work. They use tone and texture positively and their drawing is bold and accurate. The observational drawing and portraiture is quite sophisticated and well in-line with the requirements of the key stage.
133. The quality of teaching is, generally, good and at times very good. This has a beneficial impact on students' learning at all the key stages and encourages the positive and enthusiastic response of students, which was on display in the lessons observed. Lessons are well paced and interlaced with gentle humour which ensures concentration from the students. Sensitive questioning motivates students to be eager to answer and feel that their views will be respected. Teachers are aware of students with special educational needs, are always encouraging and supportive to them and set appropriate challenges. Teachers have high expectations of students and are always positive when assessing their work. This sets a good example to classes and is reflected in the students' constructive criticism of their own creations and those of others. Demonstrations from teachers and explanations of tasks to be undertaken are always accessible to students and motivate them to do well. In this area, one teacher's demonstration of texture, shading and colour-bleeding on a leaf in a watercolour lesson was much appreciated by the students whose own work was enhanced by the experience. In another lesson, students whose three Dimensional creations were beginning to crack and go out of shape were reassured by the teacher's skilful demonstration of how to rectify these faults and they were then able to initiate repairs on their own work and regain their confidence. All the teaching is designed to build on students' confidence, extend skills and develop creative responses to the projects being undertaken. There is positive use of homework.

134. The curriculum and schemes of work are wellplanned and designed to fulfil the requirements of National Curriculum and meet the demands of the GCSE and A level courses. The department is aware of the needs special educational needs students and sets appropriate challenges which ensure equality of opportunity for all. In the light of students' response and outcome of work, schemes are revised and refined to meet individual students' needs and improve standards and the commitment of students.
135. At all levels, assessment is ongoing at the end of units of work and is monitored by the head of department. However, more formal methods of recording both this and the advice to students concerning target setting and further avenues for investigation and exploration are needed. This will enhance the record-keeping in the department, ensure continuity of assessment and provide an instantly accessible pupil profile of progress through the key stages. More standardisation of assessment within the department is also required.
136. Formal and informal meetings of staff take place on a regular basis and there is sampling of teaching. More opportunities for staff to observe each other and share expertise would be advantageous to the development of the department and be a useful source of in-service training.
137. Liaison between the head of department and the contributory middle schools is insufficient to enable him to assess how successfully students are progressing through Key Stage 3 and which attainment targets have been fully completed.
138. Resources are favourable to the department and the problem of lack of space in the three Dimensional classroom is about to be resolved. The school has addressed the recommendations from the last OFSTED report. Teaching standards have improved, students work purposefully and lesson-planning and preparation is clear and detailed. The work on display provides excellent stimulus material for the students. Teachers do not make sufficient use of information communication technology in the department to reinforce the design work and history of art projects being undertaken.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

139. At Key Stage 4, the GCSE design and technology results are in-line with national averages overall. The A\*-C grades in 1999 for textiles was well above average, for food and graphics it was above average and for product design below average. The A\*-G grades in all of these design and technology subjects are broadly in-line with national averages and the results of similar schools with girls outperforming boys. However, in product design and in graphics, boys significantly outperform the girls.
140. Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3, shows attainment is below national averages at Level 5+ although the results have improved since 1998. There is a significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls with girls outperforming the boys. The standard of work seen in lessons is broadly in-line with national levels. In Year 9, the majority of students are able to follow the design process. Good examples are evident in product design, graphics and textiles. The ability to use the full design process in food is limited by the use of less open design tasks in the subject. Students show limited ability to analyse and draw conclusions using existing products due to the lack of opportunities

provided in lessons to do this. There are more opportunities at Key Stage 4 in food technology where product analysis becomes an integral part of the students' own individual product design work at GCSE level. In graphics, students are taught a range of two Dimensional and three 3 Dimensional drawing skills and are beginning to apply their skills in other areas of technology. Students are able to generate a range of ideas, develop, make and evaluate their work. They are encouraged to plan their practical work in detail using drawings and annotation to explain each stage of development. In food technology students are able to develop and plan their work using structured worksheets and time plans. They generate and use numerical data in the form of charts, graphs and food calculations. There are, however, some missed opportunities for students to work to scale in the Year 11 product design lessons while designing and making a wheeled toy. Most students observe a high level of accuracy in producing working drawings and measuring in product design, graphics and food. Students at the middle and higher levels of ability, mainly girls, are less challenged by the level of work covered in class and tasks are not suitably differentiated for them.

141. The curriculum in design and technology is well planned and there is a fair balance of experience for students in all material areas. There is insufficient coverage however of electronics and the use of information communication technology control technology is not developed in design and technology. The department offers a good range of subjects at GCSE level including child development and contributes well to the teaching for GNVQ courses. Students at Key Stage 4 make satisfactory progress with their GCSE examination course work and teachers have put strategies in place to raise the level of success in 2000.
142. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to good with some lessons being very good. Teachers plan well and are organised for lessons. Students benefit best from lessons that have the right level of differentiated support materials. A good example is in a Year 11 food lesson where students use frames to support their planning and are able to develop their own ideas. Marking is inconsistent across the department and lacks feedback to students. There is a system in place to monitor teaching but the information gathered is underused to share good practice across design and technology. Monitoring is not used effectively to develop methods of raising students' standards further.
143. Since the last inspection, schemes of work are in place but they do not provide information on differentiation, special educational needs, timings and use of resources. Programmes of Study have been mapped out and formative assessment forms a part of target setting. There is regular dialogue between teachers and students on how to improve levels of attainment. Departmental meetings take place and minutes are kept. The faculty benefits from a high standard of accommodation and subjects are sited in the same building. The level of resource is good and it is well used and the department has a positive approach to maintaining high standards of hygiene and safety. There have been some improvements by re-organising aspects of the product design and graphic products and this has enabled the development of an information communication technology resource in the department.

## **GEOGRAPHY**



144. End of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1999 were above the national average for boys and girls reaching Level 5 and over but below for boys and girls reaching Level 6 and over. More girls than boys have reached Level 5 but the number reaching Level 6 and over are equal. Results show an improvement over the last three years. GCSE results for grades A\* - C have improved overall since 1997 but have been significantly below the school residuals and below national averages for similar schools. Results for grades A\* - G were below national average up to 1998 and above in 1999. Girls' results have been higher than boys' results in all grade bands, although the gap was narrowed in 1999.
145. GCE A level results were above the national average in 1997 and 1998 but below in 1999. Results for grades A - E have fluctuated, as have differences between the results of boys and girls.
146. Standards of attainment are good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Current work seen in all key stages is of a good standard, for all levels of ability. Key Stage 3 students can identify factors affecting the stage of economic development of a country and can analyse and explain them using appropriate geographical vocabulary. They can use information communication technology to process correlations between different factors, and have the word- processing skills to present their work effectively. Key Stage 4 students understand the concept of; honeypot tourism; and its effects on a locality and they can explain the causes and effects of increased tourism. Sixth form students can carry out detailed investigations into social and geographical issues. Literacy skills are well taught, and students can express themselves well verbally and in writing. However, numeracy skills are not so well developed.
147. Students make good progress in all key stages. It is most notable in lessons where students are encouraged to think for themselves and are given challenging tasks and a variety of activities. Particularly effective were the Year 9 lesson where students were identifying stereotypes about life in under-developed countries, and the sixth form lesson where students were analysing soil samples in preparation for a fieldwork expedition. Students with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress because of the high level of additional study support they are given by the department.
148. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. Without exception, students are well behaved in class and work co-operatively and productively with their peers. Responses to questions and other stimuli are enthusiastic.
149. The quality of teaching in the department is good overall and very good in Key Stage 3, with some excellent teaching observed. Teachers have a high level of expertise and subject knowledge. The best learning takes place in lessons that are well paced, and meet the needs of students of different levels of ability. In a few lessons the tasks were not well matched to the ability of the students and as a result learning was less effective. Assessment of students' work is a strength of the department. Individual targets are set and the progress of all students is constantly monitored. Curriculum provision is continually reviewed in the light of assessment results.
150. The department has a committed team of well qualified teachers who work in a supportive atmosphere. All departmental documentation is in place and the curriculum provision is good, with the exception of opportunities for first-hand investigation in Year 9. Steps have been taken to raise attainment and to

narrow the gap in attainment between girls and boys, particularly at the end of Key Stage 4, and there is evidence of success in both these areas. However, further efforts need to be made and more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning styles would contribute to the spread of best practice.

151. Since the last report progress has been made in raising attainment, particularly that of boys. Departmental planning is now very good and meets the needs of all students, though there is still a lack of challenge for some students, particularly in Key Stage 4. Standards of student behaviour are now excellent in all groups observed.

## **HISTORY**

152. GCSE results are below the national average. In Key Stage 4 the number of girls who opt for history is much lower than that of boys, so that twice as many boys as girls are following the subject in Years 10 and 11. As a consequence the ability levels overall in Key Stage 4 are much lower in history than in the other subjects, resulting in grades in the GCSE which are just below average for girls and significantly below average for boys. In Key Stage 4 girls achieve higher grades than boys, boys achieving well below the school and the national average. In the sixth form both boys and girls are achieving grades at or above national averages.
153. Overall, attainment in lessons seen by the end of Key Stage 3 is in-line with national averages and matches that of teacher assessments. However, for boys in Key Stage 3, attainment is below average, mostly due to underdeveloped writing and other basic literacy skills. Students with special educational needs, mostly boys in Key Stage 4, make good progress and their attainment is in-line with their abilities, as a result of teaching which uses resources suited to their needs.
154. Progress throughout Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and teacher assessments are in line with national averages. Progress throughout Key Stage 4 is satisfactory for all abilities, including those with special educational needs, but is better for higher students attaining, who are mainly girls. A good start has been made in raising the achievement of lower attaining students, by means of good targeting and the focussing on key points, with short tests and more varied methods of teaching. Progress was good in one Year 9 class where students were asked to identify key words about the start of World War One which was reinforced by text and pictures, then tested for immediate reinforcement. Progress in the sixth form is good, with students responding well to challenging teaching.
155. Progress in standards of literacy, especially writing, is inconsistent as there is not an overall strategy in the department. However, students are able to use precise vocabulary and are able to interpret historical texts well. Extended writing is being developed in the well designed projects in Key Stage 3. A good start has been made in using the Internet as a resource, but the use of information communication technology throughout needs more development, backed by suitable staff training.
156. Overall teaching is good and during the inspection never less than satisfactory. Teachers use their specialist knowledge well to stimulate interest. One lower

ability class in Year 11 were able to follow American reactions to the Vietnam War as a result of good clear exposition by the teacher. Teachers set high expectations and plan well, but methods are more successful where students are stimulated by working in groups. One Year 11 class worked well to analyse documents that showed varied interpretations of Hitler, then reported back their findings. Class management is very good and helps to ensure that there is a good learning environment. Assessment is good, with both students and parents being provided with clear details of attainment and targets.

157. Students' attitudes and behaviour contribute considerably to effective learning. Students can sustain their concentration and are capable of extended work. When given the opportunity, they enjoy independent work and like to use computers, an important focal point for future development. Those with special educational needs are well motivated when stimulated by suitable materials, for which the department is fairly well equipped. Students welcome the chance to display their work and make greater effort when they can see their work shown on the walls.
158. Since the previous inspection, progress has been made in a more consistent approach to assessment, in giving more support to students with special educational needs and in providing better sound insulation between classrooms. Measures are now needed to raise achievement, particularly for boys, with a range of consistently applied strategies for improving literacy, numeracy and the use of information communication technology. The effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation, raised last time, has still to be achieved. There is still a need to review the effectiveness and appropriateness of teaching methods. The department has produced a good development plan which identifies the main problems, but requires a determined effort with target deadlines, to achieve them.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

159. At Key Stage 3, teacher assessment in information communication technology is below the national average at Level 5+. There is a difference in the attainment of boys and girls with girls outperforming the boys. Attainment in all work seen and lessons is broadly in-line with national expectations. There has been an improvement in the attainment of all students in information communication technology over the last three years. The improvement is mostly due to the increase of opportunities for students to use computers. By the end of Key Stage 3, students cover a good variety of basic skills in information communication technology. In Year 9 students use desktop publishing, learn to use spreadsheets and databases and are able to use CD-ROMS. They are also able to calculate the area of an object. This was demonstrated well in the 'Soup Can' project. However, students' analytical skills and opportunities for them to generate their own data, apply their knowledge to a range of situations and select their own software, are still underdeveloped.
160. At Key Stage 4, information communication technology is not offered as a separate examination option. The school does not yet meet the requirement to report progress in information communication technology to parents. A good example showing the use of information communication technology is in business studies where it is well integrated into the course. In the sixth form, the development of 'Key Skills' in information communication technology has

started and this is being delivered as a discrete course as well as part of the GNVQ and A level courses. Here students are encouraged to build on their range of competence and are confident in using and applying information communication technology skills.

161. Students at Key Stage 3 work and make satisfactory progress where lessons are well structured and the goals are clear. A small number of boys do not benefit fully from lessons due to the limited range of learning resources and classroom strategies used to differentiate the work. As a result they have difficulty in concentrating for long periods and are less challenged. A number of students are passive in lessons and as a result are underachieving when compared with their levels of ability.
162. The information community technology policy identifies the need to develop information community technology skills both in discrete information community technology lessons and across subjects. There are some good examples of departments using information community technology; for example, in mathematics where information community technology is built into schemes of work and students show competence in handling data while using spreadsheets. Also some work in English makes use of word-processing for letter writing and producing newspaper articles and students are able to draft and redraft their work. In addition, geography and history use spreadsheets and CD-ROMS are used to search information. Students with special educational needs in English are well supported by learning support teachers whom using information community technology. Although the co-ordination of information community technology across the curriculum has started, many areas are still underdeveloped, especially in art, religious education, music, modern languages, design and technology and physical education.
163. Most students are hard working, well behaved and respond well to work in lessons. They form positive relationships with teachers, their peers and other adults in the department. They are well supported by the schools' mentoring system.
164. Teaching is satisfactory and shows a good level of planning and preparation for lessons. Teachers explain the technical language associated with information communication technology and encourage students to use these correctly, in good support of their developing literacy skills. Work folders are produced to guide Year 9 students through each task. Some students race through the folder and finish before others. A few students reach only the first section of the folder. As a result, the range of information communication technology skills covered by a small number of students who work at a slower pace, is limited to the word-processing section only. Differentiation needs to take into account the opportunity for each student to cover the basic knowledge of each skill at the end of the module and also enable students of higher levels of ability to cover the skills in more depth. There is a lack of suitable strategies and appropriately differentiated learning resources within each skill base to cover the full range of ability in the mixed ability groups. In one class observed the range of skills being covered included spreadsheets and databases to desktop publishing and calculating the area of a can. This made it difficult for the teacher to support all the students effectively and learning was less good. Teachers show good knowledge of their subject and in the main use questions and answers effectively to assess how much the students learn and understand. There is an

assessment scheme in place and it is well linked to the tasks covered in class. Marking, however, is inconsistent across the department. This often fails to recognise positive achievement and students are unaware of the features of their work that are good and how they can improve.

165. Since the last inspection, there has been an emphasis on the development of information communication technology and this form one of the main targets within the school development plan. There is a discrete information community technology lesson in Year 9 and the departmental handbook is helpful though policies and schemes of work are in their early stages of development. There is a need to extend them further to give more detail about intended outcomes, differentiation, marking procedures, classroom organisation, timing, resources and special educational needs support. The school has increased the information community technology resources considerably to create well equipped information community technology suites, some being specifically linked to faculty areas and also a well used learning resource centre which is of real benefit to the students of the school.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

166. Standards at Key Stage 3 are in-line with National Curriculum Level 4, the national average. Students' first modern language is French. In 1999 the number of students assessed at above the national average was in-line with similar schools, but the number at Level 5 and above was slightly below. At Key Stage 4 overall standards in GCSE are below average. Standards in French have been higher than in German in recent years and in 1998 were above the national average. In 1999, however, the percentage of students in the higher grades A\*-C fell to 43 per cent, in-line with other comprehensive schools, but slightly below the figure of 46 per cent for all maintained schools. Despite fluctuations in the interim, standards have remained static since 1995. German results have improved significantly over recent years, and faster than the national improvement, but, at 39 per cent A\*-C compared with 52 per cent nationally, they remain well below average. A larger proportion of the cohort of students at Purbeck are entered for a modern language examination as compared to the national average for school entry. Although students' results in French in both 1997 and 1998 in relation to their other subjects were better than in other schools, results in modern languages overall are amongst the least strong in the school. Girls perform better than boys, but the overall advantage is not significant. In 1999, boys' results in French in the higher GCSE grades were better than girls', against the national trend. In the sixth form, GCE Advanced level standards meet average expectations for the course. Students attain within the whole A E range, with an improving trend at A B in recent years; evidence of the school adding value to students' attainment.
167. Attainment seen during the inspection is similar to that shown by the performance data for previous years. At Key Stage 3 higher attainers in both languages retain and recall prior learning well. They can produce short paragraphs about themselves and deduce broad meaning from detail in speech and text. Average attaining students understand the language, but their speaking and writing skills are underdeveloped. They do not speak enough from memory and, in French, pay insufficient attention to pronunciation. At Key Stage 4, the average standard in French in Year 11 is grade D: some higher attaining students are on course for grades A and B, but not enough. In

contrast to last year, standards are higher in German in which the average is grade C. The highest attainers in each language have good active and passive vocabulary and are secure in a range of structure and tense. However, although these students can recall and reproduce set phrases, few manipulate the language with confidence. Typically in French students are still struggling to form present tense endings, ask questions and pronounce accurately. They do not cope well with the unfamiliar or use the language freely other than in well-rehearsed phrases. In the sixth form there is a similar lack of confidence. Students can understand a range of writing from German Romantic poetry in Year 12 to current French journalism in Year 13, and most have a sound grasp of structure, but speaking is undeveloped. They lack spontaneity and, with one or two exceptions, the freedom to paraphrase or improvise. The work of the very best students in both languages, however, is of the highest standard, thoughtfully and carefully structured, with a very good range of vocabulary and expression.

168. Overall students achieve satisfactorily in each key stage. In German talented students achieve well by Year 11. Many make good progress in only three years. In Year 9, for example, in relation to standards expected in the second modern language, many students have already made up much of the deficit caused by their late start. Some higher attainers in French maintain an equally good rate of progress in all skills over both key stages. The rate of progress of dual linguists in Key Stage 4 is limited by inappropriate timetabling arrangements. Many lower attaining students, especially those with special educational needs, achieve well, supported by suitable setting arrangements and, in Key Stage 4, appropriate certification. Average attaining students, however, underachieve in Key Stage 4. There are too many students at grade D who are capable of higher standards, especially in speaking and writing. Standards are improving in German at each key stage, but are not consistently high enough in French at Key Stage 4.
169. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in over half of lessons in Key Stage 3, and three-quarters of German teaching is good or very good. Whilst very few lessons are unsatisfactory, teaching is too inconsistent in French in Key Stage 4 to raise standards to the required levels. There are strengths. Teachers are proficient speakers of the foreign language and use their expertise very effectively in all classes to present a clear model for students' own speaking. This helps students' listening skills to develop well at all key stages, and pronunciation in German is usually good. They do not plan specifically to teach basic literacy skills, but they teach clarity of both spoken and written work and most ensure successfully that students understand language structure. They have high expectations of students' effort and concentration, and manage behaviour well. Consequently, students' attitudes are positive and behaviour very good. They generally maintain a lively pace and, although computers are used too infrequently, use time and resources well; for example, the teacher in a Year 9 French class used empty boxes and a variety of objects of different materials to illustrate phrases for talking about the importance of recycling. In Year 11, the teacher had prepared a stimulating and amusing video of French television advertisements which helped develop comprehension skills. In some lessons, techniques for presenting new learning with the overhead projector are particularly motivating. On the whole, however, methods lack variety and are determined more by the text book than by pupil need. There are some very good examples of students leading speaking activities, especially in Key Stage

3 German, but many opportunities are missed to promote students' own use of the language both in small groups and independently from memory. On these occasions, especially in middle and upper sets in Years 9 and 10, students are not challenged enough. The teacher talks too much and students lack confidence in initiating conversation and improvising. On other occasions, teachers misjudge the difficulty of new learning and do not provide sufficient interim steps to help students understand. As a result, the typical student is very dependent up on the teacher's explanation. One reason is that teachers do not use routine assessment well enough to inform either their own planning for individual student need or the students themselves. Key Stage 3 students have insufficient knowledge of their learning. A satisfactory start has been made in Key Stage 4 in keeping students informed of their progress and what they need to do, but the standard of marking in all years is too variable. The marking scheme is unhelpful and not applied consistently. Some students' work is marked too infrequently.

170. The head of faculty has ensured that progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. A number of issues have been addressed successfully. Standards have improved at Key Stage 3 and lower attaining students now achieve well. Boys' standards have risen significantly and are continuing to rise at Key Stage 4, the result of specifically designed strategies in; for example, student grouping and methodology. Documentation is much better, although the Key Stage 3 German scheme of work awaits completion. Improved liaison practice has led to more effective exchange and use of information at Key Stage 3, and student monitoring has begun. The particular strengths of the faculty are the teachers' very good use of the target language, and the improvement in German standards. The main weaknesses are the uneven levels of prior learning at entry in Year 9, standards of oral work throughout, a lack of rigour in the monitoring of teaching and the failure to raise GCSE standards in French. The faculty has already identified a number of strategies with which it plans to tackle these weaknesses. It plans to improve staff computing skills and develop the application of information communication technology and has set ambitious targets for GCSE A\*-C success in 2000, which may take longer to achieve. In addition, action is needed to develop students' independence, to increase the number of dual linguists at Key Stage 4 from the current very low levels, and to provide further opportunities for members of the faculty to observe each other teach.

## **MUSIC**

171. Results in the 1997, 1998 and 1999 GCSE examinations were well above national expectations. In 1999, 78 per cent of students gained an A\* - C GCSE grade and 100 per cent of students gained A\* - G grades. The number of students gaining the highest grade possible remains low. There is no significant difference in the entries and achievements of boys and girls. The small numbers following GCSE and A level courses fluctuate annually and it is impossible to draw firm conclusions from the examination data. .
172. The majority of 14 year old students achieve above national expectations. Students in Key Stage 3 have satisfactory keyboard skills and have a clear understanding of the basic principles of harmony, composition and improvisation. Year 9 students are able to listen to music and identify instruments and musical devices; for example, sequence. They are able to discuss texture and mood when comparing two contrasting pieces of music.

Those students who play orchestral instruments have a positive effect on the overall achievement of students in lessons seen. In Years 10 and 11 most students following the GCSE course are working well above the national average. They are able to compose in a variety of styles and are working above average in the use of harmony. They perform with confidence and are able to analyse parts of a score in detail. Music students in the sixth form are achieving high standards especially in composing. One student has successfully composed and arranged a piece for hand bells. Throughout the school students' listening skills, in lessons seen, were good. Since the previous inspection there are additional opportunities for students to compose and evaluate their work and the work of others.

173. In lessons students are able to consolidate information learned in previous years to good effect. In Year 10; for example, students are taught simple modulation. This knowledge is then developed in Year 12 when students are taught transitional modulation. In one Year 12 lesson, clear and accurate teaching enabled students to grasp concepts quickly and they were able to identify transitional modulations in a Schubert song
174. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and particularly effective in the GCSE and A level courses where student numbers taking the courses are small. Good classroom management and organisation of groups allows students to use their listening skills effectively in identifying musical devices. Teaching skills in performing and composing are especially good and this has a positive effect on the response of students and the raising of standards. Students respond to quick question and answer sessions at the beginning of lessons for revision purposes. In all years students are encouraged to think deeply about the mood or effect that the music creates; for example, in one Year 11 lesson, students agreed that the music of Shoenberg made them 'think' not 'feel'. Students are well organised in lessons. Good planning enables students to start work quickly and utilise time effectively. A range of differentiated work, especially in Year 9, encourages all abilities to be sufficiently challenged although classroom resources are limited; for example, students do not have headphones, often working in a noisy environment, and this restricts the opportunities for refinement of their work. There is a limited number of percussion instruments especially those that have a broad cultural base.
175. The amount of curriculum time allocated for music in Key Stage 3 is below national averages. Schemes of work lack breadth, especially in non-western music. Students' work in Year 9 is assessed and recorded regularly but the information provided does not lead to the setting of targets for improvement. GCSE and A level composition work is carefully marked and assessed. Valuable comments are made and areas for improvement are discussed with individuals. Students do not have access to information communication technology in music. There are no opportunities for students to use computers linked to keyboards; for example, composing sound tracks in Key Stage 3, a variety of compositions in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. This inhibits students' opportunities to develop in the full range of the National Curriculum. All students are given the opportunity to play orchestral instruments.
176. The department is supported by nine peripatetic teachers who teach approximately ten per cent of all students. The school provides free lessons for GCSE and A level students. In lessons seen, good teaching contributes to the overall high standards achieved by these students. The skills of students who



play instruments in all years make a positive contribution to the overall standards of achievement in music and add to the quality of life in the school.

177. The department makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. However, too few students opt for music in GCSE and A level examinations. The school and the department need to address this situation in order to increase take-up. Behaviour is very good in all lessons seen. Students take their responsibilities within the department seriously. Instrumental players contribute a considerable amount of time to practice after school. Students are offered a range of extra-curricular activities which are very well supported. Bands play in various venues in the community and in national competitions where they have won awards. Parents of instrumentalists make a valuable contribution towards the success of the bands. In particular, they organise fund-raising events and help considerably with transportation of students and instruments. Parents are sent a regular newsletter giving information about fund-raising events and dates of performances.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

178. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is in-line with national expectations but by the end of Key Stage 4 attainment in the core curriculum is above expectations. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, 71 per cent of students achieved A\*-C grades, which is well above the national expectations. Since 1995, 100 per cent of students have gained A-G grades, and this is a remarkable achievement. The results achieved in 1999 were slightly below those achieved in 1998 but the assessments and target grades for 2000 indicate that further significant improvements should be made this year. The results achieved, in 1999, however, were considerably above the national average. The majority of the students achieve better results in physical education than in most other subject areas and the results are significantly better than school, county and national averages. There is a difference between the performance of boys and girls at GCSE, with 92 per cent of girls and 61 per cent of boys achieving the higher grades. The teaching methodology of the staff, the extensive planning with support material and the study skills sessions at lunch-times ensure that high standards are maintained. Special educational needs students are well integrated into the programme and achieve standards in-line with the rest of the cohort. The school introduced A level physical education studies two years ago and the numbers taking the subject have risen from nine in 1998 to nineteen in the current Year 12, who will be taking the examination in 2001. The school has achieved 100 per cent A-E grades since undertaking the examination and teacher assessments indicate that achievements will continue to improve in the forthcoming years. A substantial number of students represent the school in competitive matches, with many playing representative games at regional, county and, in one case, national level. The school runs in excess of 30 school teams on a regular basis competing in ten different sports. The school has an extensive extra-curricular programme with 18 different activities, all well attended, being observed during the week of the inspection.
179. During the lessons observed in the inspection students' attainment was above national expectations in the range of activities observed, namely, dance, gymnastics, trampolining, swimming, soccer, hockey, badminton, outdoor activities and cross-country as well as both A level and GCSE examination

work. Teachers emphasised the value of warming up, stretching out and cooling down. Great emphasis was placed on improving basic skills with students in Year 9 able to pass, throw, catch and strike a ball to good effect. In Year 10 further emphasis was placed on techniques and strategies with principles of attack and defence observed in soccer and hockey lessons, corner taking techniques observed in hockey lessons and serving tactics observed in badminton. Basic dance steps were emphasised before commencing practice of complex routines and teachers constantly reinforced the expectation of producing quality work both in theoretical lessons, practical sessions and extra-curricular clubs. In both gymnastic lessons with Year 10 and trampolining lessons in Year 11 students demonstrate an ability to perform basic and complex movements combining these into sequences showing quality linking strategies. Students demonstrated ability to roll canoes during the outdoor activities lessons and tumble turns and advanced stroke techniques were seen during the swimming lesson with Year 9. High attaining students achieved high standards of performance and the mixed ability sessions enabled those students to support and encourage those of more limited ability. Student collaboration and co-operation are a particular strength of the school and these contribute to the high standards of performance and student involvement. All students exhibit an ability to work both independently and in small groups.

180. By the end of Key Stage 4 students have participated in a range of activities making good use of the excellent on-site facilities but also using facilities off site for outdoor activities and more specialist activities. Throughout the time up to the end of Key Stage 4 students build upon the work they have encountered previously with the regular liaison meetings with feeder middle schools and the quality of planning enabling continuity of programming to be achieved. In all the lessons seen the students made good progress and many of them showed considerable tenacity in their endeavours to improve on previous performances, particularly during a cross-country lesson for Year 9 girls and a canoeing lesson for Year 11 students. The majority of the core lessons seen were teacher directed and more time should be given to allow students to plan and evaluate activities and appreciate the performance of others. Particular strengths of teaching are the enthusiasm of the staff, their commitment to high standards, their determination to improve the quality of the courses offered, the strategic use of teacher expertise and the support offered beyond the formal timetable. Teachers have an excellent rapport with students, their class management skills are extremely good and their involvement of non-participants reinforces their expectations. An increasing number of students are opting for GCSE and A level physical education studies, which will put increased pressure on the timetable and may require additional qualified staff.
181. Students have a very positive attitude towards learning and almost all are extremely enthusiastic about physical education and are very keen to participate. A large majority are very well motivated, listen attentively, concentrate well and make sustained, determined effort throughout the lesson. They are very co-operative and apply themselves to the tasks set by the teacher working effectively either individually or in small groups. They enjoy being challenged and strive to revise and review their own performance to improve their skills and techniques. Students enjoy accepting responsibility when collecting, arranging and distributing equipment, supporting other students, particularly those with special educational needs, and when taking on the mantle of captaincy. Parents and students speak highly of physical education

stressing enjoyment and participation as key features of the subject.

182. Overall the teaching is very good and effective in each key stage and the sixth form. During the inspection no lessons were unsatisfactory, half were good and one third were very good. This is an improvement on the judgements made during the last inspection. The good class management skills, the rapport with students, the effective use of facilities and the pace of the lessons all contribute to a positive working environment where the students make good progress, are keen to learn and the activities are well matched to the abilities of the students. The school shares the outstanding facilities with the local community in a harmonious partnership and the sports hall, swimming pool, fitness suite, squash courts, studio and classroom are all utilised effectively and enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided by the school. A recent bid to the National Lottery is expected to be approved and provide an artificial playing surface, which will improve the facilities for hockey and wet weather activities. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection in the areas of gymnastics, dance and outdoor education. Assessment of core activities still needs continual review to inform curriculum planning and better use of information communication technology could be made to complement both the core and examination programmes. Monitoring of the groupings and activities choices should ensure greater equality of access for both boys and girls to the entire curriculum range. The links with feeder schools, the development planning, the commitment to raising standards, the regular reviews and the desire to make regular, significant improvements all contribute to provide good learning opportunities for the students and are a strength of the school.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

183. GCSE results have been consistent since 1996 with the percentage of A\*-C grades being around 55 per cent. In 1999, 57 per cent of students achieved Grade A\*-C. These results are in-line with the national average for all schools. Compared with similar schools the GCSE results are above average and compared with the results of other subjects in the school are well above average. The quality of education in the religious education department is a strength of the school.
184. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is average for students of this age. However, student's knowledge and understanding of Christianity is above average. Their reading and oral skills are average. Their knowledge and understanding of world religions other than Christianity is underdeveloped. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. For those studying for the GCSE examinations it is above average. Their knowledge and understanding of Christianity, particularly the life of Jesus in St Mark's Gospel is very good. Students are developing good analytical and investigative skills and their oral skills are very good. For students taking core religious education, attainment is in-line with the average for students of this age. Whilst their knowledge of Christianity and oral skills are above average, their knowledge and understanding of other world religions is less developed. There are two new A level groups in Years 12 and 13 and the attainment in these groups is above average. The range of attainment is from A to E with many students attaining beyond their set targets. There is no disparity between boys' and girls'

attainment at either GCSE or A level and an equal number of boys and girls take GCSE in Year 10. The attainment of students with special educational needs is above what might be expected at Key Stage 4 and at A level.

185. The progress made by all students across both key stages and in the sixth form is good. They are adding to their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and developing the skills of investigation and evaluation. Students' oral skills are developing steadily across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form they are of a very high level. The progress of students with special educational needs is good across the school. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good progress in the sixth form.
186. Students' attitudes are good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. Throughout each year their behaviour is very good and exemplary in the sixth form. Students' personal development is very good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and excellent in the sixth form. Students are enthusiastic and hard-working. They effectively take part in discussions and are prepared to respect one another's views and listen carefully to each, other. Relationships between students are very good and they are very supportive of one another and respect each other.
187. Overall the quality of teaching is good. In Key Stages 3 and 4 it is good and in the sixth form it is very good. Two-fifths of the teaching observed was very good, and in nine out of ten lessons was good or better. Teachers' expectations at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are excellent and this is backed up with very good assessment of students' work and individual target-setting to encourage students to improve. The management of students in the sixth form is excellent and at Key Stages 3 and 4 it is good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is good in all years. Questioning skills are excellent and teachers spend a lot of time with individual students, encouraging them to improve their learning. Relationships with students are excellent and a significant contribution is made to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Literary skills are developing well but girls-out perform boys in written work. There is a lack of use of information communication technology at Key Stages 3 and 4 and opportunities for quiet and reflection are limited.
188. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. There is a detailed departmental handbook, which is a model in its clarity and comprehensive coverage of aims, assessment, differentiation and details necessary to support teachers in delivering the subject. There is clear purpose and direction and a strong emphasis on target-setting to raise standards even further. There is a rigorous and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance. Accommodation is satisfactory but the small rooms limit the range of activities that can be provided for delivery of the curriculum.
189. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. GCSE grades have improved. Two A level groups have been established and are running well. Schemes of work relate clearly to the locally agreed syllabus and target-setting is now a strength of the department and raising standards. The study of religions other than Christianity is woven into core religious education provision at Key Stage 4. Discussions of beliefs and values are part of the sixth form general studies courses but the department is not involved in the delivery of this course.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES IF INCLUDED IN THE INSPECTION

190. Attainment in business studies at Key Stage 4 is average in the current year, although GCSE results in 1999 were below average and in 1998 they were below average for boys. Attainment in A level economics is average or above, with better predicted grades in Year 12 than in Year 13.
191. Progress at Key Stage 4 is good, with the quality of learning enhanced by the integrated use of information communication technology. Students enjoy the opportunity to work on their projects combining individual use of the computer and learning in classroom. They are well motivated, as the project contributes to their final GCSE assessment.
192. In the sixth form, students make good or very good progress and are able to discuss economics at a mature level, using good technical language. The quality of their writing is good and they use graphs and statistics well. The students benefit from the move to a modular syllabus, allowing them to resit any modules in which they fall below average. This should ensure that A level grades are much higher in 2000 than in 1999, when results were below average.
193. Teaching is satisfactory or good in Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. Teachers use well prepared resources, using the Internet for up-to-date information. In Key Stage 4 teachers build the use of information communication technology into their lessons very well and give good individual help.
194. In economics, teaching is very good. Teachers continually challenge students to respond to facts and ideas. Students are helped to express and justify their responses. Teaching is brisk and purposeful, ensuring a good learning environment.
195. Students respond very well to business studies and economics. In Key Stage 4 they find the content both interesting and useful. Several stated that they were profiting from using computers in a fully integrated manner. They cannot yet progress to an Advanced business studies, a gap to be rectified from 2000. Many A level students in economics said they were taking the subject as an interesting complement to their other A levels.
196. Both subjects are well managed and resourced. The school's very good business links could be used more effectively in Key Stage 4. Progression from Key Stage 4 with the NVQ in business administration is good and the curriculum changes from September 2000 will provide even more opportunities for progression. The school plays a leading part in many business related initiatives at a national level.