

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **PATE'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Cheltenham

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique Reference Number: 115754

Headteacher: Mr D J Barnes

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Reporting inspector: Mr A Henderson  
12066

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> November – 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708118

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary grammar
Type of control:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Princess Elizabeth Way Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL51 OHG
Telephone number:	01242 523169
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C J Mourton
Date of previous inspection:	10 <sup>th</sup> March 1995

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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G Anderson, Lay Inspector	Equal opportunities	
C Griffin	English Drama Theatre studies	
A Bird	Mathematics Economics Business studies	
R Woodhouse A King	Science Modern foreign languages	
S Matthews	Latin History Politics	Assessment
I Stuart	Geography Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
A Lemon	Art Special educational needs	Staffing The efficiency of the school
D Morris M Butterworth C Worthington	Music Physical education Design and technology Information technology	Accommodation Resources

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Attainment in the school, particularly in English, mathematics and science, is very high; GCSE and A-level results have improved since the previous inspection and are very high compared with the national average and results of similar schools
- There is a very powerful ethos within the school; pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning and there is very strong commitment to high standards
- Excellent relationships and pupils' behaviour are major strengths of the school
- Pupils' moral and social development is excellent
- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection, and is now very good overall
- This very good teaching ensures that pupils' progress is also very good as they move through the school, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form
- The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs, and is supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities
- The school is very well led by the headteacher, who is providing very clear educational direction and purpose, with positive support from the governors and senior management team
- Planning for school development has improved, and is underpinned by excellent financial control and administration

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Progress in art in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory
- II. Arrangements for design and technology in Key Stage 4, and for religious education in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form do not meet statutory requirements
- III. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation by senior and subject managers of the implementation of agreed policies and procedures, and of the quality of teaching and learning in subjects
- IV. Reporting to parents in Key Stages 3 and 4 provides insufficient guidance for improvement

Pate's Grammar School is a very good school, where pupils have every opportunity to reach their personal and academic potential, take advantage of an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities, and achieve very high standards. The school's considerable range of strengths far exceeds its weaknesses. It provides very good value for money. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents/guardians of pupils at the school.

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

The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection of 1995. There has been impressive progress in improving academic attainment at all levels, and this improvement has been strongly supported by teaching which is now very good overall. The high quality of teaching also represents considerable improvement since the previous inspection. These high standards of attainment and teaching have been sustained during the school's translation from three sub-standard sites in 1995 to the excellent new accommodation it now enjoys. In other respects, progress has been uneven in tackling the issues identified in the previous report. The provision for aesthetic education has improved, although other curricular weaknesses remain: statutory requirements are not met in religious education, nor in design and technology, whilst staffing arrangements are limiting attainment and progress in art. Shortcomings in subject planning have not been fully resolved, and despite some progress, remain a weakness in several subjects. Good progress has been made in improving resources for learning, including the library and provision for information technology. Links with primary schools have also been developed successfully, but reports to parents in Key Stages 3 and 4 are poor, and despite some changes, show insufficient improvement. Elsewhere, registration procedures are now satisfactory, health and safety concerns have been tackled, but requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met. The school clearly has the capacity for improvement.



## Standards in subjects

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

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			very high A*
			well above average A
			above average B
Key Stage 3 Tests	A*	A*	average C
GCSE Examinations	A*	A*	below average D
A/AS – levels	A*		well below average E

The standards attained by pupils in the school are very much higher than average overall.

Overall results in Key Stage 3 tests are very high compared with the national average, and with schools having pupils from similar backgrounds. Results in English, mathematics and science are all very high compared with both benchmarks, and have been so consistently since the previous inspection.

The average GCSE points score has risen steadily since the previous inspection, and in 1999 is almost twice the national average, and is very high compared with similar schools. Boys and girls perform equally well. Results in all GCSE subjects are very high with more than two thirds of all passes at the higher A\* or A grades. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest A\* grades is consistently very high in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, French, German, and history.

The average points score for students taking A-level examinations is also very high, and shows considerable improvement since 1996. The average score exceeds the national average by more than one third, and in 1999, three quarters of all A-level passes were at the higher A and B grades. The overall pass rate at A-level was 98.2 per cent in 1998, and this improved to 98.9 per cent in 1999, with both figures well above the national average.

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9 (Key Stage 3)	Good	Physical education, music	Art
Years 10-11 (Key Stage 4)	Very good	English, science, mathematics, religious education, music, physical education	
Sixth form	Very good	English, science, mathematics, economics, religious education, art, information technology, music, physical education	
English	Very good		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons; in 41 per cent of lessons it was very good or better. This represents considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Examples of very good teaching were seen in all subjects. In the very small number of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, shortcomings arose from limited knowledge and expectation of the National Curriculum requirements in art, and low teacher expectations and weak planning in one lesson each of music, history, and modern foreign languages.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Behaviour is excellent, and the school is a very calm, orderly place. Pupils are notably courteous and considerate.
Attendance	Attendance and punctuality are excellent.
Ethos*	Excellent. Relationships are very good indeed, and the school provides a very supportive learning environment with a powerful commitment to, and expectation of, very high standards.
Leadership and management	Good overall. The school benefits from the clear, effective leadership of the headteacher, with positive support from governors and management team. Pastoral management is good. Subject leadership is effective, although monitoring and evaluation require strengthening.
Curriculum	Generally good, and well matched to pupils' needs in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. There are weaknesses in provision in Key Stage 3 physical education, in design and technology in Key Stage 4, and religious education in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Provision for careers education is very good and there is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
Pupils with special educational needs	Make very good progress and are fully integrated into the whole life of the school, although individual education plans are not well developed.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good, with excellent provision for pupils' social and moral development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good overall. Staffing is sufficient, and very well qualified and experienced. Resource provision is very good with excellent library provision. The new accommodation is also excellent.
Value for money	The school is providing very good value for money.

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

## **The parents' views of the school**

### **What most parents like about the school**

V. Keeps parents well informed about their child's progress

VI. The standards of achievement, behaviour and positive values promoted by the school

VII. Provision for homework

VIII. The high quality of academic and pastoral support and guidance

IX. The school is approachable

X. Their children enjoy attending the school

XI. Feel they are positively encouraged to play an active part in the school.

### **What some parents are not happy about**

XII. A very small minority feel complaints are not handled effectively

XIII. A minority were not happy about arrangements for parents' evenings to discuss progress.

The inspectors' findings strongly endorse the positive views expressed by the large majority of parents. The school has sound procedures in place to deal with parental complaints. It also recognises the problems associated with parents' evenings, and is seeking improvements, for example through consideration of an appointments system.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to improve further the quality of education provided, and raise standards of attainment to even higher levels, the governors, headteacher, and staff should focus on:

XIV. Tackling issues relating to art, design and technology, and religious education which were identified in the previous report, and where insufficient improvement has been made, by:

- XV. ensuring that statutory requirements are properly met in design and technology in Key Stage 4; (paragraphs 31, 32, 64, 139)
- XVI. ensuring that statutory requirements are properly met in religious education in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form; (paragraphs 31, 32, 47, 64, 207)
- XVII. continuing to improve the arrangements for teaching in art, particularly in Key Stage 3. (paragraphs 24, 64, 70, 128)

XVIII. Strengthening the quality of subject management by:

- XIX. developing the effectiveness of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility; (paragraphs 54, 65, 91, 109, 120)
- XX. achieving consistent implementation of agreed whole-school and departmental policies, for example assessment, marking; (paragraphs 42, 45, 46, 109)
- XXI. improving planning for continuity and progression in learning, through improved schemes of work; (paragraphs 31, 34, 91, 106, 120, 179)
- XXII. making more effective use of assessment information and data on prior attainment, tracking pupils' progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, and setting targets for improvement; (paragraphs 42, 44, 45, 103, 107, 118, 179)
- XXIII. ensuring that reports in Key Stages 3 and 4, provide sufficient information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses, together with guidance for improvement; (paragraphs 59, 107)
- XXIV. disseminating widely the good range of very good teaching in the school. (paragraphs 23, 25, 26)

XXV. Improving evaluation and monitoring by the senior management team to ensure that school and subject policies and procedures are implemented and are effective by:

- XXVI. clarifying line management systems in the school; (paragraphs 65, 69, 207)
- XXVII. ensuring that systems and expectations are carried out regularly, consistently and rigorously. (paragraphs 57, 64, 65, 69, 79)

In addition to the key issues, the governors may wish to include the following in their action plan:

- XXVIII. ensuring that physical education provision for boys in Key Stage 3 fully covers National Curriculum requirements; (paragraphs 32, 195)
- XXIX. continuing to improve arrangements for the daily act of collective worship for all pupils. (paragraph 47)

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1. Pate's Grammar School is an above average-sized selective grammar school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 within Gloucestershire LEA. It is a voluntary aided school which is supported by the Pate's Foundation, and in 1999 reverted to voluntary status, having previously been grant maintained. The school is situated in a disadvantaged suburb of Cheltenham in new accommodation which opened in 1996. The school serves a wide geographical area, and the annual intake transfers from more than 40 primary schools mainly from Cheltenham and the surrounding areas. Almost all pupils stay on into the school's sixth form. They are joined by about 30 entrants annually to Year 12 from other schools, and these students come from a much wider area.
2. The pupils come from a range of social backgrounds with a significant majority coming from more advantaged areas than the school's immediate neighbourhood. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. Relatively few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and the proportion for whom English is an additional language is low.
3. There are 911 pupils on roll with a generally even distribution of boys and girls in main school, and more female than male students in the sixth form. The school is extremely popular and over-subscribed. The attainment of the school's intake is well above average; a verbal reasoning quotient of 120 is the formal entry requirement to this selective school at 11+. Over the past three years, the average score is more than 128, and this well above average profile is confirmed by national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. These show that all pupils achieve at least Level 5 in English, mathematics and science, and these results are very high compared with the national average. There are two pupils with statements of special educational need, and a further 26 pupils are included on the school's register for special needs, which is well below the national average. Over the past three years, all pupils from Year 11 have continued in full-time education, and 96 per cent of those leaving the sixth form have moved on to higher education, with the vast majority taking degree courses.
4. The school's declared intention is 'to educate today's young people for the challenge of tomorrow'. This is exemplified by a statement of clear aims which form the foundation of the school's provision for all pupils. This reflects the commitment it anticipates from pupils and their families in partnership with the school. Successful progress towards these aims is effectively underpinned by a range of policies, and by an improving school development plan which is starting to set appropriate targets for progress.

4. **Key indicators**

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	65	62	127

4. National Curriculum Test		English	Mathematics	Science
Results				
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	65	65	65
	Girls	62	62	62
	Total	127	127	127
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	28 (23)	38 (37)	23 (27)

  

4. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	65	65	65
	Girls	62	62	62
	Total	127	127	127
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	72 (26)	66 (64)	62 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	38 (31)	38 (37)	30 (31)

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

At the time of the inspection, 1999 GCSE national results were not available. They are included here for completeness. However, within the report, 1998 results are used as national comparisons.

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	60	63	123
GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G	
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	60	60	60	
	Girls	63	63	63	
	Total	123	123	123	
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	
	National	48 (46.3)	88 (87.5)	95 (93.4)	

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:		Year	Male	Female	Total
		1999	81	74	155

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	30.25	31.2	30.9 (29.5)	N/a	N/a	N/a
National			17.8 (17.3)	N/a	N/a	2.9 (2.9)

.....  
<sup>2</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

<sup>3</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year



## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	2.8
	Absence	National comparative data	7.7
	Unauthorised	School	0.0
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

4.

4.

## 4. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	0
	Permanent	0

## 4. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	41
	Satisfactory or better	97
	Less than satisfactory	3

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

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

##### 4. **Attainment and progress**

5. The overall profile of pupils' level of attainment on entry to the school is well above average. From this starting point pupils make very good progress as they move through the school, so that very high standards are achieved in Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE and A-level examinations, and across a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
6. Pupils come into the school with well above average levels of attainment. In 1999, the results of national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 by most pupils indicate that they all exceed the levels expected for their age in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In the standardised tests taken at 11+, a verbal reasoning quotient (VRQ) of 120 is the formal entry requirement – over the past three years the VRQ mean has exceeded 128.
7. The overall results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 are very high compared with all schools, and with schools having pupils from similar backgrounds. Performance in English, mathematics and science is very high compared with both benchmarks, and has been so since the previous inspection. Girls and boys perform similarly in all three subjects.
8. In GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1998, the proportion of pupils gaining A\*- C grades in five or more subjects was very high compared with all schools, and with schools having pupils from similar backgrounds. This has been the case since the previous inspection in 1995, with virtually all pupils gaining at least five A\*- C grades. Results for 1998 and 1999 show that all pupils successfully achieved this benchmark. A further indication of improving attainment is the steadily rising GCSE average points score from a comparative dip in 1997, when a reduction from eleven to ten examinations taken by all pupils was introduced. The average points per pupil have increased each year since then, and at 68.3 in 1999 has almost reached levels achieved with eleven examinations. This very high attainment is almost double the national average, and is also very high when compared with similar schools. The performance of boys virtually matches that of girls in contrast to the national picture.
9. Attainment in the school is very high, and is underpinned by pupils' very high standards in literacy and numeracy. In 1998 GCSE results in the three core National Curriculum subjects, English, mathematics and science, were very high for both boys and girls, whilst in other National Curriculum subjects attainment was similarly high. Results in all GCSE examination subjects were very high compared with the national average, and overall the proportion of pupils gaining the highest A\* grades was well above national figures. This was notably the case in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, French, German and history. Most recent results in 1999 show further improvement, with more than two thirds of all GCSE passes at the A\*/A grades.
10. In the sixth form, since the previous inspection the average points score of students taking two or more A-levels has been very high compared with the national average. There has been considerable improvement since 1996 also, with the points score rising by a third to the 1999 average of 30.7, the highest ever attained by the school. This notable increase is testimony to the effectiveness of the school's introduction three years ago of the use of data on GCSE attainment for predicting A-level success. In 1998 the overall pass rate was 98.2 per cent, and in almost all subjects the proportion of students achieving grades A-E was well above the national average and above average compared with similar schools. The exceptions were religious education where achievement was below average compared with both benchmarks, and in both French and German where achievement was in line with similar schools. The proportion of students achieving the higher grades A and B was high, and in most subjects was well above average both nationally and compared with similar schools. The exceptions were English, which was in line, and religious education and general studies which were below average compared with similar

schools. However, notably high achievement of grades A and B in comparison with similar selective schools was recorded in chemistry, economics, German, history and physics. The overall results for 1999 have improved notably in English, and also in French, mathematics, economics, physics, and theatre studies. They have been sustained in all other subjects, with an overall pass rate of 98.9 per cent. Also in 1999 there was notable success with three quarters of all A-level passes at the highest A and B grades, adding considerable value to the students' already high levels of attainment in their earlier GCSE examinations.

11. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, is well above average. It is very high in the core subjects of English, mathematics, and science, and is well above average in geography, history, and physical education. They are above average for all other National Curriculum subjects apart from art where they are average. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment improves, and overall is very high. Attainment in the core subjects continues to be at very high levels and is well above average in geography, history, design and technology, modern foreign languages, information technology and music. Attainment in all other subjects is above average. By the end of the sixth form, attainment overall continues to be very high, particularly in English, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. It is well above average in geography, history, politics, music, economics, business studies, religious education, and physical education, whilst in all other subjects it is above average.
12. The progress made by pupils is very good as they move through the school. It is good in Key Stage 3 and accelerates through Key Stage 4 and across the sixth form. This growing rate of progress is generated by excellent pupil attitudes linked to a well-matched curriculum and very good teaching, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The school successfully builds on the well above average standards of attainment on entry, and promotes high expectations and standards which pupils respond to with commitment and enthusiasm.
13. In Key Stage 3, progress is very good in English, mathematics, science, history and physical education. It is good in all other subjects, apart from art where lack of experience in, and poor coverage of National Curriculum requirements result in unsatisfactory progress. In Key Stage 4, progress continues to be very good in the core subjects, history, physical education, and also in modern foreign languages, and music. Progress improves in art in response to stronger teaching and is good, in line with all remaining subjects. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the appropriate educational provision, and their rates of progress reflect the general picture at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
14. In the sixth form, progress continues to be very good overall. It is very good in English, mathematics, the sciences, history, music, physical education, economics, politics, religious education, and is good in all other subjects.
15. Pupils' very high standards of attainment, and their very good rates of progress are strongly supported by their well above average skills in literacy and numeracy. These key elements make a strong contribution to the high levels of consistency of attainment and progress in the school. However, the absence of school policies for the development of both literacy and numeracy across subjects of the curriculum does not ensure their very high potential influence. Pupils' competence in information technology is well above average. The school's arrangements for the subject, and in particular pupils' use and capability of information technology in extending their attainment and progress in their other subjects are well developed.
16. Pupils with special educational needs are making very good progress in most areas of the curriculum. Their needs are no significant hindrance to them achieving as well as others. As with all pupils, the school monitors their progress closely and, if required, will provide very good support.
16. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
17. The overwhelming majority of parents feels that the standards of behaviour are very high and the inspection strongly supports that view. These excellent standards in attitudes, behaviour and personal

development have been maintained since the last inspection.

18. Pupils come to lessons prepared to work hard and are keen to succeed. Their concentration and interest in their work are excellent, even through very long sessions, as in physical education and mathematics, when they concentrate patiently. In English, their perseverance with the difficult is impressive as with Sylvia Plath's poetry. Their capacity for personal study is excellent as in design and technology and information technology where pupils work at a high level on their own, using the teacher as a facilitator.
19. Behaviour in and around the school is excellent. Most pupils behave impeccably. There is no bullying, shouting, nor pushing. There are no exclusions. Their trustworthiness can be exemplary, for example in group work in English when supervision is less direct, they still get on with the task and complete what is required. Pupils show respect for property and can leave items around which remain untouched. Changing rooms are completely free from any signs of abuse.
20. There are excellent relationships between pupils and with adults. The adult in the student is targeted and responds to those high expectations with considerable maturity, as in the high quality debates which are a feature of many lessons. This makes a considerable contribution to progress. There is excellent collaborative working when required, and pupils are comfortable working in teams and groups, for example in science and design and technology projects.
21. The respect for the values, feelings and beliefs of others is excellent and there is not a trace of arrogance. Emotional intelligence is of a high order with very good evidence of empathy and understanding, as in assemblies with visiting speakers. There is a very high degree of respect for each other and for adults, and pupils respond well to seeing things from the teacher's perspective, even in the younger years. Pupils take initiative and responsibility almost effortlessly as in physical education. Their personal development is of the highest order.

21. **Attendance**

22. The attendance of pupils is excellent at over 97 per cent and has remained so since the last inspection. There is no recorded unauthorised absence. Punctuality is good both at the start of the school day and for lessons. The very high levels of attendance make an excellent contribution to attainment and progress.

22. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

22. **Teaching**

23. The overall quality of teaching is very good, and is a primary strength of the school, contributing significantly to the high standards of pupils' attainment and progress. In Key Stage 3, teaching is good, and is very good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In more than three quarters of lessons, teaching is at least good, whilst virtually all the remainder is satisfactory. More than one third of teaching overall, and half of all teaching in the sixth form, is very good or better, and there are examples of very good teaching in all subjects. This represents considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The generally high standards within subjects have been consolidated, and the overall proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been substantially reduced to just three per cent of lessons observed.
24. Teaching is notably effective in English, mathematics, science, physical education, and music. Good teaching predominates in history, geography, modern foreign languages, religious education, information technology, and design and technology. Although it is very good in the sixth form, art teaching in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, and in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory due to limitations in some teachers' expectation and understanding of the National Curriculum requirements. This issue was a concern at the previous inspection which had been successfully resolved with the additional appointment of a specialist teacher who has now left the school. Current staffing arrangements are unsatisfactory and are adversely

affecting attainment and progress in art. The tiny proportion of unsatisfactory teaching elsewhere was in Key Stage 3 in single lessons in music, history, and modern foreign languages.

25. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are very strong generally. Expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are very high, and academic rigour is the norm, so that pupils are required to tackle demanding texts and activities with positive impact on their rates of attainment and progress. This was the case, for example, in a Year 11 religious education lesson linking sections of the Bible with Christian and alternative views about creation and the environment. A similarly successful approach was seen in a Year 13 religious education lesson where complex ethical theories were explored around the theme of civil disobedience. Lesson planning is generally good at each key stage, and is a major strength in English, science, history, and religious education. It is less secure in mathematics, where there is heavy reliance upon the textbook. In art, where lesson planning is not well supported by the subject scheme of work, there is inappropriate teacher expectation and pupil underachievement in Key Stage 3.
26. Teachers generally explain clearly to pupils what they have to learn and why. Across the school, the requirements and expectations for examination success are clearly rehearsed. In the best lessons in science, English, mathematics, history, geography, economics, business studies, religious education, and physical education, good lesson summaries review progress and understanding. Good use is made of appreciation and collective criticism in art, physical education, English, theatre studies, and design and technology. Teachers use a reasonable range of teaching strategies that are generally appropriate for the task in hand, and for pupils' capabilities. Some good examples of varied approaches were seen in English, science, music, and physical education, often with notably successful impact on learning. For example, pupils in Year 11 made excellent progress in identifying different types of imagery in 'Macbeth' as a result of their varied activities in the lesson. This was also the case in a Year 7 dance lesson where extensive use of poetry and other language created a range of excellent responses. Across most subjects, the use and application of information technology are also developing well. In some other subjects, however, a large proportion of lessons followed a similar format of teacher exposition followed by pupils undertaking associated written work. Whilst this was often of very good quality, and is a solid strategy in preparation for examinations, when used too frequently opportunities for pupils to develop skills of independent enquiry and co-operative production are restricted.
27. Most lessons proceed at a very purposeful pace, often with effective questioning which develops pupils' speaking and listening, tests knowledge and understanding, and leads skilfully on to new work. This approach was notably successful in a Year 12 business studies lesson which focused on the stock market and shares analysis. However, in modern foreign languages, insufficient use is made of the target language in Key Stages 3 and 4. Generally, learning resources are well organised and used effectively to promote learning, although some subjects, for example mathematics, are over-reliant on the standard textbook. Tasks are generally well matched to the needs and capabilities of a majority of pupils, although there is need to continue to develop appropriate tasks which fully extend the most able in Key Stages 3 and 4.
28. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, and the use of information relating to pupils' prior attainment at GCSE has been used effectively in gauging progress and predicting success in A-level examinations. There is room to develop this process further in the earlier stages of the school. Homework is well planned and used effectively to supplement classwork, extend learning and challenge pupils' understanding. This was particularly the case in a Year 9 science lesson relating to reflection. Marking is generally diligent and supportive, but except in the sixth form, teachers' comments do not guide pupils towards improvement.
29. The management of pupils in the classroom is a very positive strength of the school. Teachers are good role models, and relate very well to pupils, providing a high level of individual support and encouragement. They take very good care of pupils and relationships are notably good. Many teachers are good listeners who treat all pupils with equal respect. As a result, the school is notably free from tension, and has a very strong atmosphere of trust and consideration in which pupils are able to thrive in their learning and personal development.

30. Teachers are aware of which pupils have a special educational need. They do not make specific provision for them beyond suitable resources for hearing and visually impaired pupils. The two pupils with statements are supported when necessary in lessons but both are largely independent learners. The liaison between teachers and the staff with responsibilities for special educational needs provision is managed mainly through effective pastoral arrangements.
30. **The curriculum and assessment**
31. The school has satisfactorily responded to some of the issues raised in the 1995 inspection report but some concerns remain. Provision for aesthetic education has been successfully improved. Good pastoral and educational activity links with primary schools have been established, though curriculum links are less extensive. Excellent standards of work have been maintained. Some amendments have been made to the balance of the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4, and to the framework of the timetable. There has been some improvement in departmental documentation, but schemes of work are not sufficiently comprehensive or consistent regarding learning aims, assessment tasks, matching tasks to suit differing ranges of attainments and opportunities for use of information technology. Statutory shortcomings in religious education and design and technology have not been remedied.
32. The school provides a curriculum that is appropriate for the learning needs of its pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Statutory requirements are met except for the provision of religious education in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the provision for boys in Key Stage 3 physical education, and the provision of design and technology for all pupils at Key Stage 4.
33. Clear statements of values and principles underpin the curriculum as a whole and governors regularly review the policy. Required whole-school policies are in place but there is no whole-school policy for literacy and numeracy. The governing body is informed about the curriculum through the curriculum and admissions committee. Curriculum issues are discussed regularly, for example the implications for sixth-form curriculum and course organisation following the introduction of revised accreditation from September 2000. The school development plan also addresses this development. The provision for equal opportunities is good and is underpinned by a clear policy.
34. The curriculum has good breadth and relevance but has shortcomings in balance at Key Stage 3. Planning for progression and continuity is satisfactory overall. It is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages at Key Stages 3 and 4, in art at Key Stage 3 and in religious education at Key Stage 4. It is good in mathematics and history and satisfactory in other subjects. Teachers' knowledge of the needs of courses and examination requirements is good and provides the progression and continuity in lessons that are less evident in schemes of work.
35. At Key Stage 3, pupils cover the full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education and personal and social education. The overall time allocation is below the national minimum recommended level. Time allocated to science and modern foreign languages is above the minimum recommended level. This enables all pupils to take French and German and to study the separate sciences of physics, chemistry and biology. Time allocated to mathematics, English, design and technology, information technology and religious education is below the minimum recommendation. The large amount of time between lessons adversely affects the continuity of learning in religious education. Time allocated for other subjects is broadly in line with recommendations. All lessons are taught in tutor groups. Most subjects are taught in 70-minute blocks with the exceptions of French, German and mathematics which are taught in single 35-minute lessons wherever possible, reflecting the principle that these subjects are more effectively taught when contact is more frequent. A group of pupils studies Latin in Year 9 on an extra-curricular basis.
36. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum with the exception of design and technology which all pupils do not take. All pupils take GCSE courses in English language and literature, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, a humanities subject, an aesthetic or technology

subject, and either French or German. Approximately half the pupils take GCSE examinations in both French and German. Drama is an increasingly popular option with a third of pupils taking it in Year 11 and approximately half in Year 10. The overall curriculum range provides good breadth for the pupils and meets the needs of academically high attainers. It also gives them a range of progression choices into the sixth form. Pupils are taught in ability sets in mathematics. The school has reduced the number of GCSE subjects from eleven to ten since the last inspection in order to encourage a broader range of teaching and learning styles in lessons. As at Key Stage 3 the time allocation for science teaching is above the minimum recommended allocation to enable the teaching of separate sciences. The time allocated to English is slightly above the recommended level while for mathematics it is below. Sex and health education and religious education are taught in the personal development programme. The small amount of time available for religious education does not provide enough time for a coherent course.

37. Provision in the sixth form is very good and highly appropriate to the high academic needs and aspirations of the students. The sixth form offers A-level courses to 296 students. There are 20 A-level subjects taken by students in the current Year 12 and two AS levels. There are GCSE courses in Spanish and Latin. Time allocation to subjects is appropriate and groups are of an appropriate size. Setting is used in mathematics. In addition to subjects that students have previously studied for examinations, there are courses in economics, politics, business studies and physical education. All pupils take general studies. Work experience takes place in Year 12 with some students arranging their own placements, including some in Germany. Provision for religious education does not comply with statutory requirements.
38. Provision for careers education and guidance is very good and a strength of the school. It is distinctive because guidance is very much tailored to suit the needs of the individual rather than through whole-group teaching. The provision is well organised and benefits from lively leadership. A strong feature is the availability of the teacher to provide individual advice. The school has good liaison with the careers service and has an excellent range of contacts with employers. Other sources of guidance include a successful careers convention and a very good careers library.
39. Cross-curricular themes such as sex education and health education are covered at both key stages and in the programme for personal and health education. The provision is satisfactory but still at a developing stage, although personal development over the whole school is a strength. There is no monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme in meeting the needs of the pupils or in finding out the pupils' evaluation of the programme. There has been no formal audit to track the contribution of other subjects to the pupils' personal development. There is good rapport between staff and pupils in personal development lessons, especially at Key Stage 4 where the developing maturity of the pupils helps better interaction to take place.
40. The information the school obtains on new pupils from primary schools helps identify those with a special educational need. Within the school, pupils giving cause for concern are quickly brought to the attention of pastoral staff and a decision is made on inclusion on the special educational needs register. There are no criteria or assessments used for distinguishing a special educational need from other factors. This applies equally to the very able and gifted pupils whose exceptional needs are not identified systematically. However, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, benefit from being fully integrated into the whole life of the school.
41. The school's extra-curricular provision is excellent and greatly valued by the pupils. There are many opportunities and they are well supported. For example, in addition to sports teams at every level, over 200 pupils are involved in Combined Cadet Force (CCF) activities and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. More than 250 pupils are involved in music activities. Drama is a strength. During the inspection, rehearsals were taking place for a forthcoming production of 'Macbeth', and starting for a lower school production of 'Oh! What a Lovely War'. There are many opportunities for public speaking in both internal and external competitions. There are Young Enterprise groups and Engineering for Education groups in the sixth form. There is a full and varied programme of school visits: these include cultural visits, foreign language visits, work experience in Germany, recreational visits, and community and outdoor pursuits. Contacts with local primary schools are very active, with many pupils visiting the

school's conservation area and sixth formers going to primary schools to help with the development of reading. In addition, there are numerous extension activities that enrich the curriculum and the pupils' learning.

41.

#### **Assessment**

42. Overall the systems for assessing attainment are satisfactory. The school now has a concise but clear policy on assessment which is available to all staff in the staff handbook. This allows each department to develop its own procedures and methods for marking and assessing pupils' work. Each subject must set a piece of assessed work at least every two weeks. There is a clear expectation that work will be marked regularly but at present there is no agreement about what this means. Practice across the school, and even within departments, varies considerably and is unsatisfactory. There are formal examinations in most subjects each year as required by the policy. Some subjects have well established and effective procedures for assessment as noted in the last inspection, but both modern foreign languages and mathematics have failed to develop an appropriate system. More departments now link assessment to National Curriculum attainment targets, but not all. There is insufficient use of standard assessment tasks and other data, particularly in mathematics where pupils do not know how well they are doing or how they could improve.

43. Procedures are generally much more clear and effective in Key Stage 4 for examination classes than they are in Key Stage 3. The recording of pupils' attainment and progress also varies amongst subjects. In history, record keeping is meticulous and refers to National Curriculum levels from Year 7. In modern foreign languages, where assessment is very underdeveloped, important data is not held within the department.

44. The school has begun to develop some limited target setting and in some subjects, for example art, pupils are involved in self-assessment. However, the use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is only just satisfactory and requires development in some subjects, notably modern foreign languages and mathematics. Assessment data, although more readily available for examination classes, is still only just adequate particularly its use in target setting. The school has successfully used local education authority data in predicting pupils' A-level success based on prior attainment in GCSE. The potential for this process in monitoring progress and setting targets for pupil attainment has not yet been introduced earlier in the school.

45. Overall, the use of assessment information to help planning future lessons is broadly satisfactory. However, although teachers know pupils very well, few departments cross-moderate work or keep samples of moderated work, although this does happen in subjects such as history where procedures are more fully developed. Neither this, nor other information, is being used by all subjects to monitor and evaluate progress. The use of assessment information to help in longer-term planning varies across subjects. Only in the best instances are subjects using data to scrutinise and analyse examination results, and then consider changes in what is being taught and the methods used. The school as a whole has not seen the potential of assessment as a vital component of planning, and this area is not well monitored, nor does it feature in the current school development plan.

46. Progress made in assessment and recording since the last inspection is satisfactory. More use is being made of results and target setting, and self-assessment is being developed in some subjects and through the profile questionnaires. However, all the issues raised in the last inspection report have not been fully addressed; there is still too much variation in practice, no clarity with regard to the purpose of assessment and a lack of monitoring of the procedures used.

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

47. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. There is no formal whole-school policy, nor an overall view of what happens. However, the strong personal



commitment and leadership given by the headteacher contribute very significantly to the excellent ethos, and provide very firm direction for the work of the school in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The strengths identified in the previous report, particularly high moral standards and excellent supportive and caring relationships, have been maintained. There has been progress in addressing the key issues of satisfying statutory requirements in respect of collective worship and religious education, but those requirements are still not fully met. Because there is no overall view of what happens in the school as a whole and in some subject areas, provision is often implicit rather than explicit; it is also sometimes uneven across the school and subjects. The spiritual and multi-cultural dimensions are relatively under-developed. Therefore, with greater cohesion and consistency, especially in spiritual and multi-cultural areas, there is potential for still further improvement in provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

48. Provision for spiritual development is good overall. There are examples of excellent practice. A Year 7 dance lesson made outstanding use of poems to produce creative dance sequences; the pupils, in their groups, delivered the poems with real feeling and expression which led to some quite thrilling dance interpretations. The conclusion of a Year 9 science lesson on the laws of reflection of light used an impressionist painting of Monet to extend pupils' thinking about reflection and paradoxes, leading them through a challenging homework task to ideas and concepts well beyond the mundane. Reference to the War Memorial above the door in the Hall contributed to an extremely moving singing by the choir of 'Crossing the bar', accompanied by the organ. Examples of this quality are not common, and work to promote spirituality is rarely specifically planned. However, subjects such as English and religious education do give opportunities for pupils to focus on the deeper values and meanings of life, although the lack of time for religious education means that the subject does not have the opportunity to make as full a contribution to pupils' spiritual development as it is potentially able to make.
49. Assemblies make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development, including the spiritual dimension. The full school assembly observed during the inspection was an excellent occasion. It was relaxed and relatively informal, but it was a meaningful celebration of spiritual, moral and social qualities. The headteacher gave a powerful message that was brief, highly focused and delivered in a friendly yet persuasive way. There was time for reflection, and a prayer successfully completed an act of worship. The notices emphasised the range of activities open to pupils, as well as celebrating some notable successes. It was leadership from the headteacher at its best. Other assemblies successfully draw the school together in different ways so that pupils clearly identify with the school and its values.
50. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. There is a caring, friendly relaxed atmosphere with tension-free relationships, based on trust and respect. The school is a strong moral community. Adults are excellent role models, with virtually no evidence of inappropriate use of authority. There is a very clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are trusted and given responsibility for their own behaviour, including having access to most areas of the building outside lesson times. Assemblies, religious education and personal and social education lessons contribute strongly to pupils' moral development. In English, there is much work on moral issues such as racism when studying 'To Kill a Mocking Bird' and moral values in 'Animal Farm'. In geography, work on population topics and many others contributes to pupils' moral development.
51. The school's provision for pupils' social development is also excellent. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including numerous residential visits, many linked with cultural opportunities. The CCF and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme together involve well over 200 pupils, and the very great range of musical and sporting activities also contributes very significantly to opportunities for pupils' social development. The deliberate policy of not having a formal prefect system means that the emphasis is on pupils' volunteering to take responsibilities. Large numbers do so, with activities organised mainly by pupils themselves within the strong house system being particularly notable. As well as sporting activities in houses, events such as debating and musical competitions involve large numbers of pupils. Although the school is highly selective in its intake, there is no noticeable elitism in the day-to-day life of the school, and there are many genuine efforts to get involved with the local community. Examples include visits to the conservation area by local primary school children and local residents, the Top Link sports day for local primary children organised by the A-level physical education group, bands

playing locally, and sixth formers helping with breakfast clubs and reading in local schools. These and other activities help to promote positive citizenship, along with the more formal work in lessons which encourages social development through co-operative and collaborative activities.

52. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. There are many very good features such as the involvement of several hundred pupils in musical activities of various sorts. There are many school productions and concerts, as well as visits to cultural events and exhibitions in this country and abroad. Exchanges and other visits abroad widen horizons and promote an understanding of other cultures; work in geography focuses at times on a number of different cultures, including Brazil, Kenya and Japan. The opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and heritage are a real strength in English, and pupils in the school are aware of the school's own traditions and history. The actor in residence is a major support for drama, dance and other activities. The large amount of pupils' art work around the school is a very positive celebration of imagination and creativity. The multi-cultural nature of Britain at the end of the 20th century is not sufficiently emphasised, and work in music and art concentrates mainly on European and Western traditions. However, there are references to African, oriental, Latin American and jazz cultures in music. An example of very good practice in promoting pupils' appreciation of the richness and diversity of other cultures was seen in a technology project; in this project, pupils were undertaking very good research into Japanese, African, Indian and Italian cultures in order to produce logos and menus for ethnic restaurants which reflected those cultures.

**52. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

53. Provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils is very good overall and the strengths have been maintained since the last inspection. Staff and pupils respect the adult in each other and there are easy tension-free relationships which have a very positive impact on pupils' ability to cope with life in school.
54. Procedures for monitoring and promoting progress and personal development are good overall, but are particularly good for personal development. Arrangements for monitoring and promoting academic progress are informal but effective with termly reports being used to identify underperformance. Report cards are used for appropriate follow-up. The school is sensitive to the background of students and the level of support they may require, and there are good opportunities in Years 7, 9 and 11 for extra support from tutors through opportunities in personal and social education lessons for withdrawal. Profile questions specific to each year group can provide a useful basis for discussion. There are better opportunities for support in the sixth form and this is often initiated by students. The school positively promotes the emotional intelligence of pupils through trust, individual responsibility, and the promotion of dialogue and interpersonal skills. Although there is some good work in personal and social education there is no formal monitoring of its impact, nor of the delivery of the programme overall, including the tutorials and the curriculum.
55. Procedures for the monitoring and promotion of good behaviour are excellent and fostered by the excellent ethos of the school in an atmosphere of trust, respect and empathy for all. Incidents are tackled by looking for the underlying cause. Bullying is not an issue due to the way it is addressed and the culture of the school.
56. Procedures to monitor and promote good attendance are very good. Pupils want to come to school and there are high expectations of them. Attendance is monitored through a weekly meeting of senior staff who work in partnership and are sensitive to the reasons for absence. The school follows up absence quickly, particularly where there is a cause for concern. Support for prolonged absence is organised in consultation with parents and a programme of work organised to send home. Requirements for recording and reporting attendance are met.
57. Procedures for child protection and promoting pupils' well-being, health and safety are good. Child protection procedures are sound; the headteacher has overall responsibility and staff have received training. The policy is based on local education authority guidelines and proper procedures are followed. Pupils are given good advice to protect themselves through the personal and social education programme

and parents have attended a drugs education day. Health and safety procedures are good. There is an appropriate policy, staff training and statutory safety checks but there is no central database of information. The care of property is excellent. There are appropriate procedures for the conduct of school visits and first-aid, and there is good medical support.

57. **Partnership with parents and the community**

58. The partnership of the school with the community is good and has remained so since the last inspection. The quality of information which the school provides for parents is satisfactory. There is a website for parents with easy access and giving good information. The information about the school is planned and organised and well presented but limited in quantity and frequency. There is a school calendar and two well presented newspapers written by students. Parents are given satisfactory help to understand the curriculum, and this includes a Year 9 options evening for GCSE, an evening for parents of students in Year 11 on the future of A-levels, an UCAS evening and meetings in connection with trips.

59. Annual reports to parents are poor. They do not generally say what a pupil knows, understands and can do, nor needs to do to improve. The school accepts that many comments are non-specific and vague. There are two reports a year in Years 7, 8 and 9 and a grade sheet in the third term. There is little monitoring of reports other than for the sixth form where reports are significantly better. Some parents are understandably frustrated that appointments are not available for all parent meetings and that the queuing system can impinge on privacy. Whilst these evenings do not necessarily coincide with reports, the school is happy to provide individual follow-up if requested.

60. Parental involvement in their children's learning is very good, they have a very real interest in their work. The school is sensitive to the needs of pupils who need to do their homework in school which is open to them until 6 p.m. The quality of support, and the values that students bring with them into the school ensure that their motivation and commitment to learning are very high and make a significant contribution to their attainment and progress. The contribution that parents bring into the school by way of expertise is limited by their level of commitments, but there is help from engineers, and with sport and transport. Parents are involved in the formal reviews of those with special educational needs. The Parents' Association is very supportive of the school financially and socially, and in addition to successful fundraising, parents make generous contributions to the school by way of covenants.

61. Enrichment of the work of the school through its links with the community is good. Pupils are given very good opportunities to contribute to the life of the local community and their own school community so enhancing their own personal development and developing a greater understanding of citizenship. Students support a local primary school with literacy, assisting in a breakfast club where sixth formers support and talk with children. There is a taster sports day organised by students in Year 12 doing physical education with their teacher. The conservation area is enjoyed by others in the community. There are links with elderly people in sheltered housing and school bands play at Remembrance Day services. Students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, in charity work, and in voluntary work, for example with local primary schools in the Cheltenham Literary Festival. Satisfactory use is made of the community to enhance the curriculum. The discretionary fund of the headteacher ensures that curriculum trips are available to all students. There is a CCF summer camp and overseas trips to France and Germany. There are an actor and an engineer in residence, and good support from banks for business enterprise. There is a very good range of support for work experience and the careers evening. Liaison with feeder schools is more difficult due to the exceptionally large number but induction arrangements for new pupils into the school meet their needs well. There is very good liaison with universities.

61. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

61. **Leadership and management**

62. The leadership and management of the school are good, with some outstanding strengths alongside areas for improvement. The school benefits from a very strong ethos and an equally clear sense of purpose and direction which permeate its practice. The school has appropriate aims which are successfully achieved. They are evident in documentation and are clearly reflected in the daily life of the school, and in its development priorities. Pupils, parents, staff and governors are in no doubt about the determination to sustain and improve high standards of attainment and personal development. The high expectations of effort and behaviour are set within a framework of excellent relationships and discipline, and have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and response to school.
63. Governors are strongly committed to the school's well being and have contributed much time and hard work in securing it. Through a well-defined committee structure and an appropriate programme of meetings, governors are kept well-informed and provide good support to the school. Links with the headteacher and senior management team are strong and productive. Governors play particularly important roles in overseeing financial processes, developing business links, and planning building and site improvements. They are very well supported by the Pate's Foundation in these activities. Following recent training, governors are now beginning to strengthen their role in strategic planning, and establishing more formal monitoring procedures through their recently agreed links with specific areas of the school.
64. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Since his appointment in 1986 he has established a strong agenda for high achievement in both academic and personal development. He has orchestrated change with notable success, not least in guiding the school through its amalgamations, to and from grant maintained status, and most recently from three sub-standard sites into its present excellent accommodation. This substantive progress has been achieved within a framework of rising attainment and high standards. His clear vision and ambition for the school are strongly endorsed by the governors and supported by the senior management team and staff generally. The headteacher is well supported by a loyal, hardworking senior team whose complementary skills and expertise are used effectively. Together they have guided the school to higher levels of academic attainment than obtained at the previous inspection. The very substantial improvement in accommodation is further testimony to the school's response to issues raised at the previous inspection. Overall progress towards tackling issues raised by the previous report is satisfactory. Weaknesses outlined in art, design and technology, and modern foreign languages remain cause for concern, together with inconsistencies in some departmental documentation. There has clearly been improvement in almost all job descriptions, although those for personal and social education are confusing. Resources for learning have been improved, and the links with primary schools also. Reports to parents remain cause for concern, except in the sixth form where they are good. Procedures for monitoring health and safety are now satisfactory. However, despite some improvement, the statutory shortcomings at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form in religious education remain; arrangements for design and technology also do not meet requirements at Key Stage 4. This uneven pattern of response reflects insufficient monitoring of agreed strategies for improvement.
65. School management structures are generally effective. Pastoral support is well managed through a very effective house system, and the pastoral and academic roles of tutors are linked well. Arrangements for reviewing pupils' academic and personal development are good, and are well co-ordinated by the three section heads. The majority of subjects are well organised and administration is good. Heads of department are generally effective, but, despite clear responsibilities set out in their job descriptions, their monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, and the quality of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. As a result, in most departments, there is insufficient monitoring and support for teaching and learning to spread good practice, to support and encourage teachers, ensure coherence and continuity, and to make effective intervention when needed. Strategies such as the regular scrutiny of books are inconsistently carried out, and the regular observation and review of lessons are not in evidence. This area of management requires greater emphasis in the roles of both subject heads and senior management team.
66. The school does not have a full regard for the code of practice on the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs. It does not, for example, make individual education plans for pupils it places at the assessment Stages 2 and 3. Special educational needs provision is managed in various ways within a number of separate responsibilities which makes it hard to co-ordinate it well. There is not a sufficiently informed overview. The teacher responsible for the special educational needs

register has not enough time to co-ordinate provision in the classroom with the pastoral arrangements, parents and external agencies, when the latter are involved.

67. Since the previous inspection the school process for development planning has improved. The quality of whole-school planning is good and now is clearly linked to the budget cycle with identified costings, responsibilities, time scales and expected benefits. The process is based on self-review, and links effectively with the regular progress reviews with subjects which leads to their development plans. Targets for progress are established, but whilst generally sound, subject priorities are not supported by costed action plans which would make it easier to monitor implementation and evaluation of outcomes.
68. The school is very well led and managed on a day-to-day basis. Established routines are well understood by staff and pupils, and contribute to the smooth running of the school. A regular pattern of staff meetings is in place. The staff handbook is a detailed reference and provides staff with the information and guidance required to undertake their responsibilities effectively. All statutory policies are in place. The school complies with statutory requirements, apart from provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, and the previously mentioned shortcomings in religious education, and design and technology.
69. Management was judged to be 'impressive' at the previous inspection in 1995. Despite the equally impressive progress in academic performance, teaching profile, and school accommodation since that time, the school's response to the previous inspection has been uneven. As a result, only satisfactory progress has been made in tackling the key issues identified then. Indisputably, the school has the capacity to make further progress. A more rigorous approach by senior management and subject leaders to ensuring the implementation of agreed policies, and to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning will accelerate this process.
69. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**
70. There is a good number of teachers whose qualifications match the demands of the curriculum very well. Over half the teachers have twenty years or more service, a significant proportion of whom have gained their experience at the school and this continuity of service is a strength of the school. The limited subject expertise identified at the last inspection in a few areas of the curriculum has been tackled almost entirely. The large number of part-time instrumental teachers for music is well qualified and the actor in residence enhances programmes in drama and English, having a positive effect on standards. A recent reduction in the school's statutory funding has constrained recruitment and while many teachers teach two or three subjects, this does not affect standards adversely in most areas of the curriculum. It does in art, where a well-qualified teacher who left this year has not been replaced. Two teachers from other subjects who now teach art are qualified but lack current experience. This arrangement contributes to unsatisfactory progress by pupils in art.
71. There is good provision of technical support staff, administrative, financial and clerical staff. Two pupils with statements of special educational needs are supported in a planned way by a classroom assistant.
72. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are satisfactory. A deputy headteacher and heads of subjects discuss and agree priorities for training. Training funds are managed flexibly so that teachers and departments can plan or apply for courses. Humanities, for example, have organised training in using information technology. Teachers have been observed teaching by senior staff but this does not contribute substantially to their training needs. As part of their induction, newly appointed staff have a handbook, receive adequate support from their line manager, and opportunities to visit other schools.
73. The severe criticism of accommodation made in the last report is no longer relevant because since it was made in 1995, the school moved in 1996, into completely new premises. The new buildings are impressive and finished to a high specification. Fittings and fixtures are of unusually good quality and

there are some very good design features, for example, the way lockers and central heating radiators are fitted flush to the walls in the main corridors. However, despite their attractive design, corridors and stairways become very congested at change over times, and, were it not for the fact that the school is an exceptionally orderly community, could be hazardous. Almost all subjects have very good accommodation, but there are shortcomings: in art, the rooms are too small and there is no suitable space for sixth-form work; in music, inadequate storage impinges on classroom space, and lack of effective sound proofing between rooms creates conditions which have an adverse impact on learning; history teaching rooms are not big enough. The school's attractive main hall is also used for dining purposes. There is good display around the school, and two very good libraries. Apart from the shortcomings referred to, the accommodation provides a stimulating and well-maintained learning environment which allows the curriculum to be taught very effectively.

74. Three issues were raised by the previous report - computer facilities were inadequate, library stocks had limitations, and four subjects, art, modern foreign languages, mathematics and music had insufficient resources.
75. Computer facilities are now much improved and, although the pupil:computer ratio is still slightly higher than the national average, very good use is made of the computers which are available. There is good CD-ROM provision with over 70 provided in the library for a range of subjects. Students are accessing these facilities in increasing numbers but access points are limited and only one is available for the Internet.
76. The library is very well stocked and very efficiently organised. Each subject is provided with a detailed inventory of its stock in terms of books and information technology but not all make effective use of the library for teaching. The room is well designed, quiet and easily accessible for pupils and students who make extensive use of it both at lunchtimes and for one hour after the end of the school day. Students are happy that the library meets their needs. The increases in stock mean that space is becoming scarce and some specialist collections have had to be stored as a result. All subjects are catered for well, with the exception of mathematics, where provision is weak.
77. Subject specialist resources are satisfactory in history, music and mathematics and in all other subjects they are good or very good. Storage space is adequate in all subjects, other than in music.
77. **The efficiency of the school**
78. Financial planning is satisfactory and it meets the school's aim of coherence in spending and solvency. While the school's statutory funding is smaller compared with previous years, its overall income is well above average. This is due to the financial support provided by the Pate's Foundation, the Parents' Association and other sources. There has been prudent planning to respond to the reduction in income from the local education authority as a result of the school's recent reversion from grant maintained status. A sensible contingency fund has been accumulated which enables the school to maintain most of the high quality in teaching and curriculum. The Pate's Foundation has agreed sensibly to a financial plan supporting much of the extra-curricular activities and ensures this excellent provision remains. A sound school development plan is set in a three-year time scale providing priorities for the whole school. The costs of these priorities are estimated roundly and a rolling programme within an annual time frame is set to complete plans. Departments contribute to development planning and this leads largely to improving their resources, for example, in information technology. There is no active participation by subject staff in evaluating the outcomes of their development plans. The success of the spending on staff development is hard to gauge because there is not sufficient monitoring of the impact on teaching and curriculum development.
79. Spending on staff is above average, in part necessitated by the long service of many teachers. The proportion of time teachers spend teaching is above average and they are deployed well generally. All of the school's accommodation and learning resources are used well. Spending on resources remains well above the national average. The use of corridors, recesses and the hall for the display of pupils' art

makes a very successful contribution to enlivening the school and celebrating pupils' aesthetic abilities.

80. Financial control is excellent. The governors possess very strong financial management expertise which enables them to fulfil their obligations well for the efficient use and safeguarding of school funds. The bursar is expert in financial management and supplies high quality budget information to the school. She has developed the school's financial manual and ensures its terms and guidance are met fully. Good value in purchasing is obtained by the bursar comparing prices, for example, in electricity and telephone charges. The most recent audit found no significant weaknesses. Administrative staff have well defined roles that they discharge efficiently.
81. The school has improved satisfactorily overall since the last inspection. Its academic standards are very high and these have improved. Pupils make very good progress because teaching is largely very effective. They benefit from excellent extra-curricular activities and excellent provision for their moral and social development. Relationships in the school are excellent and pupils have the highest quality attitudes to learning. This creates an excellent school ethos in which all pupils can flourish.

81. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

81. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

81. **English**

82. Nearly all pupils enter school with above average attainments in their end of Key Stage 2 national tests in English. They make very good progress through Key Stage 3. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 tests, attainment was very high in relation to schools nationally and in comparison with other selective schools. Over 90 per cent attained the higher Level 7 or better. This figure is also very high in relation to both all secondary schools and selective schools. Very high levels of attainment were achieved during the period 1996-98. The proportion achieving Level 7 or better has increased by more than 30 per cent since 1996. During these years, girls' attainments are slightly higher than boys but not significantly so. Boys' attainments exceeded boys' attainments nationally by more than two whole levels. Girls' attainments exceeded those for girls by just below two whole levels.
83. Similarly very high attainment is evident at the end of Key Stage 4. The proportion passing at A\*-C in the 1998 GCSE English examination is very high in comparison with all schools and well above the average for selective schools. In 1997 and 1998, more than half the candidates passed at grades A\*/A. In 1998, a slightly higher proportion of girls attained A\*/A than boys. In the 1999 GCSE examination, attainment at grades A\*/A increased further to 66 per cent. In the 1998 GCSE English literature examination, the proportion passing at A\*-C was very high in comparison with the national average and in line with the average for selective schools. Nearly half the pupils passed at grades A\*/A, whilst in 1999, this proportion increased to more than half.
84. In the sixth form, overall attainment in the 1998 A-level English examination was above the national average. The proportion who passed at grades A-B was also above the national average and in line with the average for selective schools. In 1999 the proportion passing at A-B increased considerably to 76 per cent.
85. Based on work seen during the inspection, attainment is very high at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. There are no significant weaknesses in any attainment target. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils' speaking and listening skills are very high in relation to national expectation. During a lesson on 'Animal Farm', pupils adapted their expression easily and skilfully from the less formal register used in whole-class discussion to the more rigorous formality required for a debate. Reading skills are very high. Pupils quickly and effectively summarise passages from past test papers and show perception when writing about the character of Napoleon in 'Animal Farm'. Attainment in writing is very high. Pupils write accurately and appropriately in a range of writing formats. Awareness of the need to engage the reader's interest, and the ability to do so, characterises most pupils' work. The writing of the lowest attaining pupils is nevertheless above average. They show many of the strengths of the other pupils but with less consistency.
86. Very high attainment is evident at Key Stage 4. During a lesson on 'Far From the Madding Crowd', Year 11 pupils showed considerable ability in speaking in a range of contexts, adapting their language appropriately to suit the task and the context. The small proportion of relatively lower attaining pupils are still above expectation, speaking with purpose and confidence. Course work assignments provide ample evidence of pupils forming and supporting their personal responses to the texts while at the same time analysing them closely. A small proportion are less skilled in analysing consistently, relying a little more on retelling the events of a text, but their attainment is above expectation. Overall, writing attainment is very high. The majority of pupils produce work that is practically flawless in terms of accuracy, and highly mature and controlled in terms of written expression.
87. In the sixth form, most Year 13 students work at a level that is very high in relation to national expectation. They discuss the impact and subtlety of a writer's use of language, have detailed knowledge



about themes and ironies in a text such as 'Middlemarch', and are comfortable dealing with ambiguities in a text. A small proportion are below this level but still above expectation. Their knowledge and understanding lack the breadth and depth of other students and their work contains more inaccuracies.

88. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, progress is very good. Most reach standards that are at least two levels higher than indicated by their attainment on entry. Very good progress during Key Stage 4 not only maintains very high attainment, but increases the proportion passing at the highest grade in relation to those who passed at the highest level at Key Stage 3. In the sixth form, information provided by the school for A-level grades in 1998 and 1999 shows that many students achieve higher grades than indicated by their overall GCSE performance. Further evidence of very good progress over time was seen during the inspection. The ability of Year 7 pupils to write for effect quickly improves over the first half term, as shown by their use of imagery to evoke a sense of location in their writing on 'Tristan and Iseult'. Year 10 pupils increase their range of effective writing formats, shown by their satirical pieces in response to 'Gulliver's Travels'. In the sixth form, students make very good progress in recognising an author's implied and unstated meaning in texts such as 'Middlemarch'. In the lessons observed, pupils made good progress at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, a wide range of lively teaching methods and in-depth analysis helped pupils to make very good progress.
89. The pupils' attitudes to English are very good and often excellent. This is an important factor in helping them to achieve very good progress and high attainment. Enthusiasm and interest are prominent features in the lessons. Over one third of pupils choose to study English at A-level. Pupils sustain concentration well and are prepared to look for the positive features of what they study, even when that is very challenging such as in the Year 11 lesson based on poems by Sylvia Plath. Course work at GCSE and A-level is extensive, showing high standards of independent learning and perseverance. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils do not become distracted in group work. Relationships with each other and with the teachers are excellent.
90. The quality of English teaching is very good and often excellent. It makes a significant contribution to the very high standards attained by the pupils. The department comprises specialist teachers with excellent knowledge of the subject and of appropriate teaching methods. This has a major impact on standards. Allied to this are high expectations. Teachers use a full range of teaching styles. There is clear teacher exposition; well-planned use of group and pair work; and appropriate opportunities for silent reading and writing. Teachers ensure lessons contain a very good range of tasks and plan time allocations carefully to maintain momentum and rigour. One of several excellent examples was the Year 11 lesson in which pupils analysed, on a whole-class basis, the imagery in Macbeth's final soliloquy, the teacher annotating an overhead transparency of the text with their responses. Pupils then worked in groups to find examples of different types of imagery in the whole text, producing extensive lists for other pupils to use. Overall, marking is good. It is very good and more precise at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers set homework regularly and this makes an important contribution to the pupils' continuity of learning.
91. This is a very good department but some dimensions of its work are underdeveloped. Documentation has improved since the last report. The current scheme of work provides a broad set of principles for the curriculum which, given the experience and expertise of the current staff, is effective. It does not, however, provide detail about learning aims, assessment tasks, matching tasks to suit differing ranges of attainments, and opportunities for use of information technology. In Year 11, and especially in the sixth form, pupils and students are informed about their individual attainments in relation to national expectation and about what they need to do to improve. This is not the case at Key Stage 3, where not enough use is made of pupils' prior attainment to set individual targets and to advise pupils how to reach them. There is some systematic monitoring of teachers' work, but the full potential that monitoring, evaluation and support can give to spread good practice is not fully exploited. The subject development plan has identified some important areas for improvement but lacks rigour in targets, criteria, time schedules and allocation of responsibilities. However, strengths clearly outweigh weaknesses. The head of department and his team have established an excellent ethos and provide a curriculum that is rich in good quality literature. They make English lessons extremely worthwhile, lively and effective learning experiences for the pupils.

91. **Drama**

92. Drama is taught as part of English at Key Stage 3. In the lesson observed, practical attainment was very high. At Key Stage 4, drama is a separate option. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the proportion attaining A\*-C grades was 95.5 per cent. This is very high in comparison with the national average. These high standards were maintained in 1999. In 1998, A-level theatre studies results at A-B and at A-E grades were in line with the national average. In 1999, there was a significant increase in the proportion attaining A-B to a figure of 76 per cent. This is very high in relation to the national average. In work seen during the inspection, attainment was very high at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Progress is very good at Key Stage 4, given that drama is not a separate subject at Key Stage 3. Progress in the sixth form is very good, particularly in the way students use their knowledge and understanding of theatre skills to plan and evaluate performances. Their attitudes are very good. Drama is a popular option at Key Stage 4 with nearly half the current Year 10 taking the GCSE course. Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent and is augmented by staff from the English department. Overall, knowledge and understanding of the techniques of drama teaching at all key stages are very good. Currently, the quality of teaching is enhanced by the appointment of an actor in residence. She is making an extremely valuable contribution to lessons, and to extra-curricular performances which are a strong feature of the department's work.

92. **Speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum**

93. Nearly all pupils enter school with above average attainments in their end of Key Stage 2 national tests in English and this is also reflected in their general literacy attainment. Standards improve as pupils move through the school. Overall attainment in literacy is very high when set against national expectations.
94. Very high standards of speaking and listening were observed in many curriculum areas. Year 7 pupils successfully improvised their roles as narrator in a dance lesson that combined poetry, narration and movement. In science, sixth-form students gave high quality presentations about their work. Pupils also collaborated very effectively in small group work in science throughout the school and were articulate when making observations and evaluations about their work. High levels of communication were seen in modern foreign languages and mathematics. In Year 10, religious education pupils take part in lively debates. Consistently high standards were seen in English and drama across a range of activities including formal debate, small group work, whole-class discussion and improvisations.
95. Reading standards are very high. Science teachers use reading effectively as a learning tool by giving pupils opportunities to read through texts silently to identify possible key points. Pupils also use the Internet effectively for research. In mathematics, pupils cope very well with a demanding reading level in their text books. In English, very high standards are frequently apparent. Levels of understanding are far beyond the literal, with pupils drawing inferences and evaluating the merits of what they read.
96. Writing standards are very high. Accurate spelling, punctuation and controlled expression are evident across all subjects. In science, there is an over-reliance on note taking from the board and from dictation. However, there are some good opportunities for more personal responses such as the empathetic pieces written about particles on the intranet by Year 7 pupils. In mathematics, the overall coherence and evaluation of course work investigations are of a very high standard. In Key Stage 3 geography, pupils do not have opportunities to write in a wide range of formats, but there is some empathetic writing and, in Key Stage 4, there are some very detailed descriptive and analytical pieces. There are good opportunities in religious education for empathetic and inferential writing where pupils successfully tackled topics such as 'Living in the Wilderness' and writing an obituary of Ghandi. The anatomy and physiology components of the A-level physical education course are especially well written with accurate usage of technical vocabulary.
97. There is no whole-school policy for the development of literacy. Although overall attainment is very high, the absence of a policy undermines the potential for providing whole-school guidance and for

spreading the very good practice that was observed in many areas.

97.

97. **Mathematics**

98. The results of the Key Stage 2 national tests for 1998 show that the attainment of pupils entering the school is above the national average for their age. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is very high compared to the national average for all pupils, with girls performing equally as well as boys. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 6+ and Level 7+ was well above average both for all pupils nationally and compared with pupils from similar backgrounds. Teacher assessment matched the attainment of the pupils at all levels very closely. Over the last three years, the trend for improvement is better than that nationally. Results for the 1999 tests show the very high levels of performance being maintained, with 93 per cent of pupils obtaining Level 7+ and girls continuing to perform equally as well as boys.
99. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1998, all pupils obtained GCSE mathematics grades A\* to C which is very high compared to the national average for all pupils. Over the last three years, similar results have been sustained with increasing numbers of pupils obtaining grade A. Results for the 1999 examinations show a similar pattern to previous years in mathematics.
100. The 1998 GCE A-level results in mathematics are above the national expectation and indicate improved performance when compared to the average points score by pupils at GCSE. Performance at A-level further mathematics is well above the national expectation with 100 per cent grades A to C, of which the majority obtained grade A. Results for 1999 show a continuing improvement in A-level mathematics with 72.7 per cent of pupils obtaining grade A in further mathematics, well above results achieved nationally.
101. From the lessons observed and the scrutiny of pupils' work, attainment is as expected by the end of both key stages and in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades has increased ahead of the national trend for improvement. Pupils with special educational needs match the standards of attainment achieved by all pupils at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, pupils develop strategies for solving problems and conducting investigations through planned exercises included in the scheme of work. Pupils extend a concept and articulate their thinking through set tasks; for example, pupils enthusiastically investigated the sum of the internal angles for all polygons. At Key Stage 4, pupils complete the open-ended task requirement for GCSE, for example, the 'open box' investigation to find a relation between the net of a box and its volume. In the sixth form, there were good examples of mathematical models as part of the modular course work requirement. On a day-to-day basis, opportunities to practise these skills of using and applying mathematics are limited, particularly for the high attainers.
102. Pupils' numerical skills are good. There are frequent reviews of numerical work and a consolidation of knowledge, skills and understanding at both key stages including the sixth form, although pupil performance is unrecorded. Extensive written work, completed exercises and organised notes and diagrams serve to reinforce number although poor presentation often goes unchallenged. Pupils with special educational needs match the standards obtained generally. Attainment in algebra at both key stages, including the sixth form, is above national expectations and is a strength of the department. Algebra is introduced early at Key Stage 3 with success and pupils quickly move on to applying the rules to a variety of topics, for example, the transposition of formulae with Pythagorus' Theorem. At Key Stage 4, the focus is on algebra as a tool, from formulating expressions from simple data to solving simultaneous and quadratic equations, applying all the appropriate skills well. Students in the sixth form were very competent at using both number and algebra, for example, in determining the four equations of constant acceleration from first principles. Pupils develop a good understanding of shape, space and measure through accurate diagrams and good presentation of work. Levels of attainment in handling data are as expected across both key stages, and in the sixth form. Pupils can compare experimental and theoretical probability applied to realistic data. They can distinguish between discrete and continuous data and understand the differences between the representative values including standard deviation. In the sixth form, students applied the theory of normal distribution, utilizing their knowledge of variance

and standard deviation well.

103. Progress is very good at both key stages and in the sixth form, with girls performing equally as well as boys. Progress is clearly linked to the structured scheme of work, which allows for continuity and progression. Pupils enter the school at Level 5 and by the end of Key Stage 3, all pupils are at Level 6 with the majority at Level 7, which represents significant 'value added' compared to the national picture. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the department, although provision for exceptional pupils is not evident. There is good diagnostic analysis of national tests, which are used to inform pupils' progress. Good progress is encouraged by regular and effective use of homework. Data in the context of National Curriculum attainment targets is not produced and pupils' strengths and weaknesses are not determined. Sixth-form progress is monitored through 'end of module' tests assessed internally to criteria determined by the examination boards.
104. Pupils' response to mathematics is excellent at both key stages and the sixth form. Good relationships between the pupils and teaching staff are a strength of the department contributing significantly to pupils' progress in mathematics. The pupils display a positive and mature attitude, are interested in their work and remain focused for the duration of lessons. There is a good recall of earlier work and an ability to use and apply it to new situations. Pupils with special educational needs match the standards of the rest of the class. The pupils are receptive, listen attentively and contribute to discussion without undermining the good pace of lessons, although few pose questions. They are skilled in taking responsibility for their own learning, at times marking their own work and assessing their own performance.
105. The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better at both key stages and the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is a strength of the department. At all key stages, teacher exposition and explanation are very good, reinforcing concepts and understanding. As in the previous inspection, there are insufficient strategies to support teaching and there continues to be an over-reliance on the textbook through the scheme of work. Teacher expectation is very high and appropriate, challenging the pupils. However, strategies to stimulate the pupils to think mathematically, to look beyond routines and outcomes, to ask questions and search for reasons why, are not commonplace at Key Stages 3 and 4.
106. The scheme of work allows lessons to be planned in outline, but detailed planning of teaching strategies to be employed is lacking, for example, preparing work exercises beyond the textbook, the use of time and resources need attention. There is insufficient provision of enrichment through open-ended material for the exceptional pupils. Good lessons reflected a variety of teaching methods and organisational strategies drawing on common everyday reference points. Lessons that were less successful focused on process rather than understanding and learning outcomes.
107. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent, particularly in the sixth form. There are clear expectations of good behaviour and the focus is on work for the whole lesson. Assessment records are variable and not standardised across the department. Methods of assessment are not monitored although they are effective. Standards of marking vary considerably with little diagnostic or evaluative comment to support and aid pupils' learning. This is also reflected in reports to parents at Key Stages 3 and 4. Some pupils are unaware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
108. In the sixth form, school reports are good. Teacher exposition and explanation are very good at this stage, identifying connections between mathematics topics to provide students with an understanding of the central and unifying ideas. Expectations are very high and lessons are well conceived and structured. Classwork is closely monitored but homework is less secure. Self-assessment and target setting are at an initial stage of development and require further development.
109. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides for equality of opportunity. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Schemes of work are concise for both key stages and teachers' records of coverage are up-to-date. There are clear aims for the mathematical education of the pupils with the already outstanding levels obtained across all key stages being maintained. Information and communication technology needs to be included in the scheme of work. There is no common

marking policy and monitoring of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Monitoring of both homework and classwork is also unsatisfactory. Central records are incomplete across both key stages although procedures to predict grades at GCSE and to moderate teacher assessment at Key Stage 3 are sufficiently rigorous and accurate.

109. **Numeracy**

110. Number is a strength of the pupils entering the school and the rules of number are reinforced to a high degree of sophistication at both key stages, and in the sixth form. The previous report referred to pupils deriving good standards of numeracy from their work in mathematics, which generally carries over into other curriculum subjects, and still is the case today. At Key Stage 3, applications across the curriculum focus mainly on measurement, graphs, percentages, surveys, interpreting data and the use of time and proportion. At Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, applications focus mainly on the tabulation and interpretation of statistics, the transformation of formulae, the use of calculators, information and communication technology and the use of measuring instruments. Calculators are used well at appropriate times without reliance for straightforward calculations. Mental and estimating skills are encouraged across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs match the overall performance of the rest although individual strengths and weaknesses are not monitored. Apart from mathematics, good use of number was seen in history, geography, music, design and technology, science and information and communication technology. There is no whole-school policy on numeracy and no reference to numeracy in subject schemes of work. Numeracy is promoted by posters and displays in mathematics classrooms, but not about the school.

110. **Science**

111. Attainment overall in science subjects is very high compared with national averages and also very high compared with the averages for similar schools. In the 1998 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, results in science were very high compared with the national average, with no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. All pupils reached at least Level 6, with 90 per cent achieving at least Level 7. The average National Curriculum levels obtained in both 1998 and 1999 were also very high compared with the national figures and those for similar schools. However, average levels obtained by the whole year group have fallen slightly in each of the last two years.
112. In 1998, results obtained in biology, chemistry, and physics in GCSE examinations were all very high compared with national averages, and above those for similar schools; almost 100 per cent of the year group obtained results in the range A\*-C in all three subjects. The proportion obtaining A\* and A grades in each subject was over 60 per cent; this is well above the figure for similar schools, and is particularly creditable in biology where 85 per cent gained these higher grades. Results in 1999 in the range A\*-C were again almost 100 per cent, with over 60 per cent in each subject gaining A\* or A grades. In biology and chemistry, almost 80 per cent attained these higher grades, with girls performing particularly well in biology. Otherwise, in all three subjects, there were no significant or consistent differences between the results obtained by boys and girls.
113. Results in biology, chemistry, and physics at A-level are consistently well above national averages, and also above the figures for similar schools. In 1998, results in all three subjects were very high compared with national figures for the proportion of students obtaining A or B grades. When compared with results in similar schools, the proportion obtaining these higher grades was above average in biology, and well above in physics and chemistry. Results in chemistry were particularly good, with over 80 per cent obtaining grades A or B. Girls performed particularly well in biology, and boys in physics, with no significant difference in chemistry. In 1999, the proportion of A or B grades continued to be very high compared with national figures, above the average for similar schools in biology, and well above similar schools in chemistry and physics. Results in physics at these higher grades had risen slightly to over 75 per cent, with girls and boys performing equally well. While the proportion of higher grades in chemistry had fallen, girls continued to perform well. In both 1998 and 1999, results for students gaining grades in the range A to E are also well above national averages in all three subjects, and above those for similar schools, with a 100 per cent pass rate in chemistry and physics in both year groups.

114. These high levels of attainment are replicated in work seen during the inspection. At Key Stage 3, pupils in Year 7 successfully study the chemical changes associated with the extraction of copper from malachite, and compare the energy released when different foods are burnt. By Year 9, they are able to discuss the effects of refraction of light, and consider how elements such as carbon and nitrogen are cycled within the environment. They show maturity when they discuss, for example, the scientific inaccuracy in one of Manet's impressionist paintings. In Key Stage 4, pupils in biology consider the transport of water and dissolved minerals through a plant; in chemistry, they undertake individual investigations into factors affecting chemical reactions; in physics, they consider the link between electricity and magnetism. At A-level, students continue to work at a high, and often very high, level of attainment. In biology, they attempt to identify six foods using chemical analysis, in chemistry, they study the reactions of the phenolic group, and in physics, they discuss maturely the effects of the polarisation of light, and also how the scattering of light causes the sky to be blue and the setting sun red.
115. The attainment of pupils in science on entry to the school is well above the national average. Overall, pupils make very good progress at all key stages; on occasions in the sixth form, progress is excellent. Pupils with special educational needs are well-integrated into classes and also make very good progress. The rate of progress is largely dependent on teacher expertise, and each teacher's ability to make the subject relevant and interesting. While overall progress is very good, and most lessons contain in-depth consideration of scientific principles, pupils with the very highest levels of attainment are not always stretched by the depth of challenge in the tasks set for homework. Particularly good progress occurs in lessons at Key Stage 3 on the refraction of light, at Key Stage 4 on limestone chemistry and the structure of the heart, and in the sixth form on momentum, and in practical investigations in biology, chemistry and physics.
116. Pupils show a particular interest in their work. They possess very good listening skills which they use to gain information from one another as well as from their teacher. The time available in lessons is used to the full, and pupils often leave the classroom discussing their work. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent in almost all classes. Pupils are particularly good at working together during experimental work. When given the opportunity, pupils show great initiative in organising their work, and in undertaking research. They discuss their work in a mature manner. The take-up for science subjects at A-level is always very high.
117. Overall, teaching is good in Key Stage 3, and very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. In nearly 90 per cent of lessons it is good or better, and in over half the lessons very good or excellent. A very high level of knowledge and understanding is demonstrated by teachers throughout the school, and pupils are taught in depth in all subjects. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, particularly in the sixth form. Pupils are encouraged to think about their work, and more investigational work has been introduced. The planning of lessons is always very good, and mostly excellent. Teaching methods are always good, but occasionally lack flair and excitement. There are a few lessons in which pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to use their initiative. The management of pupils is aided by well-planned lessons which lead to learning through enjoyment. Practical lessons are well organised; most lessons are planned sensibly to allow pupils sufficient time to make observations, and then have time for reflection on what has been learnt during the lesson. The marking of exercise books is variable, but mostly good, with good use of constructive comments on how to improve attainment in science. Variability includes inconsistencies across the department in the grading of work. There is insufficient monitoring of sixth-form folders. Homework is set regularly.
118. The curriculum covers the requirements of the National Curriculum. All pupils study science in Key Stage 3, and biology, chemistry and physics for GCSE, including those with special educational needs. Topics are planned to provide continuity. There are minor differences in the opportunities provided for pupils, due to lack of standardisation of course content. The assessment of pupils' work now provides comparative information about the progress of individual pupils. However, insufficient use is made of this information and examination results to provide reliable comparative annual measures of the value added in each key stage. There are some good examples of assessment informing curriculum planning. For example, examination papers are scrutinized by teachers in order to identify areas of strength and

weakness, and thereby amend teaching strategies. There has been a significant increase in the integration of information technology into schemes of work. Further developments are planned to help overcome inconsistencies in its use across the department. There is little curriculum liaison with primary schools. Good use is made of the conservation area, but further extra-curricular opportunities are limited. Many reports to parents lack detail about pupils' attainment, and do not provide targets for improvement.

119. The department makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Those topics which make a significant impact in this area include the environment, energy conservation, pollution, nuclear energy, and the miracle of the human body and of plant structure. There are occasions when pupils become thoroughly engrossed in their studies because of the implications of their observations or discussions. However, one of the challenges for this very good department is to develop the opportunities for pupils to ponder on the wonders of science, and the impact it makes on their lives.
120. There is a commitment to high attainment in the science department and there are some strengths to be gained from the degree of autonomy enjoyed by each of the three subject heads, and the head of lower school science. Overall, leadership of the science department by the four heads of section is therefore very effective, but there are insufficient areas of common practice within the department. The department suffers from a lack of policies common to all those who teach science such as for marking and assessment, homework, developments in information technology, and tracking pupil progress. The monitoring and support for teaching are also given insufficient priority. There is no regular monitoring of classroom practice, or of sets of exercise books, in order to raise the profile of good teaching; this limits the opportunity to discuss with colleagues the contribution they are making to the success of the department, to identify accurately their staff development needs, and to tie these in with department needs. Some good curriculum development has occurred since the last inspection, but schemes of work still lack detail.
121. Since the last inspection, standards have remained high. Teaching is more ambitious, and problem-solving opportunities for pupils have increased. However, a small minority of lessons are still over-dominated by teachers. The regular marking of pupils' work has improved. Opportunities for the use of information technology to enhance learning have increased. While schemes of work have been reviewed, there is still insufficient detail to ensure equality of access for all pupils. Overall, this very good department has made good progress since the last inspection.

## 121. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### 121. **Art**

122. GCSE results in 1998 were well above average at A\*-C grades and above average for A\*-G, but pupils did significantly less well in art than in their other GCSE subjects. Girls' A\*-C grades improved in 1999, but very few boys entered and did less well compared to 1998. Over the last three years, results in the higher grades for all pupils have increased steadily and girls have made considerable improvements. A-level results in 1998 were above average at A-B grades and the overall pass rate. Results were similar in 1999 and over several years have improved slightly.
123. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectations. In several aspects, many pupils are above expectations. For example, they use a well-developed vocabulary to explain and evaluate their work. They can exploit the qualities of different materials effectively in constructing imaginative hats and shoes to express ideas drawn from Pop Art imagery. Most are aware of major artists and write knowledgeably on some, such as Warhol and Lichtenstein. The skills the majority have for making work are average. In sketchbooks, pupils draw with a variety of line and tone. The perspective and proportion in observational work are sometimes weak. When directed well in lessons, most pupils work freely and boldly with charcoal and capture the human form convincingly. There is some exceptional technical skill, for example, using colour and applying paints to express foliage, water and sky. A water colour study by a Year 7 pupil of an iris is well observed, capturing the delicacy of petals and the structure of the stem.

124. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. Many pupils manage coursework systematically, incorporating detailed research for ideas. They modify their work in the course of experiments with images and materials. Sketchbooks are used well to support this. Some use a computer profitably to manipulate scanned images. Pupils have an in-depth knowledge of artists such as Picasso and Cezanne and know the similarities and differences in the painting technique of each. Higher attainers are able to exploit the many artistic conventions found in modern art whereas lower attainers do not use these effectively. Most draw confidently and analyse form and space through careful observation. They employ a wide range of art materials without often refining their techniques as well as they could.
125. Attainment in the sixth form is above average. The students use their sketchbooks very effectively for recording and researching. Their drawing and use of colour in sketchbooks are often very accomplished and based mainly on direct observations. This standard is maintained in some larger works from still life that are very well drawn and composed. In some instances, the technical demands of working on a large scale are not handled effectively by students. The fluency and expressiveness in drawing and painting in sketchbooks are sometimes not achieved in larger work.
126. Progress is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. The majority have made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection but this is not being sustained in lessons at the present time. Some good subject teaching expertise has been lost recently and this has not been replaced adequately. A minority of pupils are making good progress because they are taught by a skilled and experienced teacher. They are making good gains in their knowledge of how Italian Renaissance artists used the rules of geometry for impact and expressiveness such as in Da Vinci's 'The Last Supper'. These pupils are challenged well in observational drawing work and rapidly come to terms with using charcoal, developing bold and confident mark-making. Elsewhere, teaching lacks the essential understanding of the National Curriculum art programme, and curriculum planning for Key Stage 3 is not specific enough to guide inexperienced teachers. Their lessons lack sufficient challenge and do not clearly identify what pupils should learn, or how their learning should be developed. Pupils, for example, begin designs for masks without the information on the diversity of mask forms to support their researches. They work from memory to develop their drawing when direct observation would be a better approach. The majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 and all students in the sixth form make good progress. Most Key Stage 4 pupils have improved their drawing skills. They work effectively through first-hand investigations as well as using ideas and approaches found in art. Pupils have learned to use a wide range of materials and techniques, but there is insufficient emphasis on developing technical proficiency. There is more finesse in drawing and use of colour in the sixth form, particularly in sketchbook work. Students have extended the depth and range of their visual investigations and a good refinement of ideas occurs. They make less progress developing the skills required to handle work on a large format.
127. Most pupils thoroughly enjoy art and take a good interest in its appreciation. They often are very involved in making work, especially in Year 7 where some pupils collaborate very effectively on constructing Pop Art hats. Many are very capable of being independent and taking the initiative in their work. There is much less enthusiasm and concentration when pupils are not challenged in lessons.
128. Teaching is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 because a large proportion is not based on a secure subject knowledge. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, there is some good art expertise, and in this instance teaching is largely good, and sometimes very good. For example, knowledge of artists is skilfully incorporated into the ways pupils approach making art, and this creates challenging lessons. This is not sufficiently prominent in unsatisfactory lessons. The expectations of pupils are too low and work proceeds at a slow pace. In the best teaching, the objectives for learning are very clear, reflecting the intentions in the National Curriculum and examination courses. Otherwise, lessons are not planned well and the most appropriate resources or ways of teaching are not given enough consideration. Some teaching is lively and interesting in setting out intentions, and careful thought is given to supporting pupils through discussion and using the right resources, such as computer applications to experiment with early sketches. Relationships with pupils are very good generally, and where teaching is effective, this leads to well focused interactions on the work, helping pupils make improvements.



129. There have been some positive improvements in art since the last inspection. National Curriculum and examination requirements are now met. Assessment is very effective at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils get more time for art and this has improved standards at Key Stage 4 where previously they had been low. There is greater flexibility in pupils choosing art at Key Stage 4, although boys are increasingly less interested in continuing with the subject. However, there has been insufficient improvement in progress and teaching in Key Stage 3, where current staffing arrangements do not enable all pupils to achieve appropriately high standards. While art accommodation is new, there is not enough space for the number of pupils and range of work. Ceramics, printing and large scale work are constrained by this.

129. **Design and technology**

130. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards according to teacher assessments are above average for 1999 showing an improvement over 1998. The 1998 GCSE results in technology were well above average; in 1999 there was considerable improvement and, compared with the national average, they were very high in design and realisation (resistant materials). They were well above average in electronic products. This is a vast improvement on attainment seen at the last inspection, when standards were considered to be generally in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, standards were judged to be more variable, with work unsatisfactory or poor in just over half the lessons.

131. In Key Stage 3, standards observed in lessons and from scrutiny of pupils' work were similar to the test results. Pupils aged 14 have good skills, can select appropriate tools for the job, and use them correctly and safely. They have an above average knowledge of the design process. For example, many pupils, especially girls, have shown good skills in researching their storage unit projects, producing fine quality image boards. They display their work well, having produced and evaluated initial sketches, and produced good working drawings. Sketch designs and the finishing of products are not so good, for example, the painted plastic clock faces are not done with an especially high degree of precision.

132. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is well above average. Pupils aged 16 produce sophisticated circuit designs for their electronic projects, for example, temperature-warning systems for freezers. They have a high level of knowledge about the function of electronic components such as capacitors and transistors. They produce neat, well-designed circuit diagrams using a dedicated information technology program.

133. Pupils make good progress through both key stages. They enter Key Stage 3 with below average to average skills in design and technology, despite well above average literacy and numeracy, but very quickly learn to do perspective drawings with accuracy. They practise their measuring and joining skills by cutting pieces of balsa wood precisely to make a load bearing bridge. They make good use of mathematical skills in this process, weighing the bridge material and the maximum load it will carry to obtain a ratio of the load per unit weight. From that, they find out which structure is the strongest.

134. Progress through Key Stage 4 is often very good because pupils choose the subject, and they are in small classes which afford intensive tutorial sessions. Good use is made of the Neighbourhood Engineers scheme where local engineers impart sophisticated knowledge in electronics classes which helps pupils make rapid progress at a deeper level. Their knowledge at this level is comparable with many A-level classes nationally.

135. Two pupils studying for AS level are working very well and making very good progress with a high quality teacher and Neighbourhood Engineers contribution, as time allows. Sixth form-students following the general studies course in basic food technology, make satisfactory progress in acquiring practical skills and knowledge to be able to survive their university years.

136. Pupils respond well to their lessons. Particularly remarkable is the way they take responsibility for their own learning from an early age. They enjoy their lessons and work hard in Key Stage 3, but the take up at GCSE is low, particularly for girls. However, those who do opt for the subject become immersed in

their work, constantly taking up challenges.

137. The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. During the previous inspection, half the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. A great improvement is apparent. The greatest strength is the teachers' knowledge and expertise, and the way it is used to give small group intensive instruction. In drawing circuit diagrams, for example, very good instruction was seen on the use of the computer to help this process. Teachers have high expectation of the work the pupils are to do, many lessons beginning with a review of pupils' work and any corrections necessary. In Year 7, for example, the teacher made sure all pupils corrected their graphics homework before proceeding with the lesson itself. Marking is good and up-to-date.
138. Planning is variable although the schemes of work are good. The student teacher makes good short-term plans; other teachers keep it in their heads on account of their experience. Organisation of workshops is generally good with a good mix of practical and theory at any one time. Workshop discipline is very good. Although teachers insist on safety goggles being worn, protective clothing is not consistently required and is a safety concern. Teachers and pupils show a strong mutual respect which fosters a good learning ethos.
139. The curriculum is narrow at both key stages, and insufficient time is given to the subject at Key Stage 3. Although skills are taught thoroughly, there is not enough time devoted to creative thinking, an essential requirement of design. The finishing of products also suffers from this shortage of time. When pupils choose their options for Key Stage 4, they have not experienced all the components of design and technology to be able to make a considered choice. The narrow curriculum with its lack of creativity may be partly responsible for the low take up, especially by girls. Statutory requirements are not met at Key Stage 4 because not everyone takes a technology subject. Although information technology is used for dedicated work in design and control, insufficient use is made of desk top publishing and word processing to enhance the presentation of examination projects at Key Stage 4. Assessment is carried out according to Key Stage 4 examination criteria applicable to both key stages. Pupils have a copy of these criteria which they check themselves.
140. The head of department is a good leader. He has built a good team who benefit from each other's expertise. He monitors teaching and learning informally and has been a successful mentor for the student teacher. He had good vision for the development of the subject but is aware of the limitations of the timetabling.
141. Resources are good for the current curriculum, though computers are rather old. Accommodation is satisfactory, but the provision for the sixth-form food technology is extremely cramped and does not support individual practical work well.
141. **Economics and Business studies**
142. Economics and business studies are only offered at A-level. Standards of attainment are high with examination results well above the national norms for selective schools. In 1998, 87.5 per cent of students achieved grades A to C in economics with 37.5 per cent obtaining grade A. The corresponding results for business studies were 86.7 per cent of students at grades A to C, with 10 per cent obtaining grade A. In 1999, all students achieved grades A to C in economics with 67.3 per cent obtaining grade A. The corresponding results for business studies in 1999 were 75 per cent gaining grades A to C, with 28.6 per cent obtaining grade A. In comparison with similar schools and national figures, the department sustains high levels of attainment and results are well above the average points score. The modular courses in both business studies and economics aid the assessment procedures for monitoring attainment.
143. Students' response to the teaching of business studies and economics is excellent. They show a high degree of interest and enthusiasm for both subjects, providing constructive input, supporting the pace of lessons and responding well to the high intellectual demands of the teachers. The relationship between

students and teachers is excellent. The students are highly motivated and have a capacity for extensive personal study. They persevere with difficult issues and questions, working collaboratively when required. They are skilled in taking responsibility for their own learning, for example, in the research module in business studies involving the investigation of real life models.

144. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of both subjects are a strength. Teacher exposition and explanation are very good, reinforcing concepts and understanding in a 'real' world manner. The expectation of the students is very high with an insistence on high standards of rigour when discussing issues. The comprehensive scheme of work enables lessons to be planned with clear aims and outcomes. Lessons are well conceived and structured, capitalising on the available resources and offering the opportunity for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. The focus is on work, utilising a variety of teaching strategies for the duration of the lesson. The use of case studies and group work was observed, together with television, information and communication technology, student presentations and the media.
145. The curriculum provides for equality of opportunity, and continuity and progression for all students to learn and make progress. Procedures for assessing attainment are in place, and information is used to inform curriculum planning and classroom practice. Student self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses is at an initial stage. Assessment records are not monitored, but are up-to-date and effective. The students are set work weekly, which is marked with constructive and diagnostic comments to aid their learning and progress. Topic tests are knowledge based, and assessment modules demanded by the course help determine the final grade. Reports to parents about student performance are informative.
146. The department is led and managed well, with clear educational direction and good support. There is a good ethos in the department, promoting an effective learning environment and a commitment to high achievement. There is good interaction and support between the three energetic teaching staff, which is a further strength of the department. The teachers share the teaching groups and divide the syllabus between them enabling both to comment on the pupils' progress. There are clear priorities in the development plan, ranging from the induction of new staff and development of more case studies to getting more students into the 'field' and listening to guest speakers on topics relevant to both courses. Accommodation and resources are good with stimulating displays promoting the subjects and supporting students well. There is good reference library provision within the department.
146.     **Geography**
147. Attainment at A-level and GCSE is well above national averages and is at the highest levels, in line with attainment in other subjects in the school. In 1998, the proportion of high grades at A-level was similar to those in the school as a whole, but it was lower in 1999. The relative performance of pupils at GCSE in 1998 was slightly lower than their overall performances in other subjects, but GCSE results in geography in 1999 were better than 1998. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 and 1999 show exceptionally high results. At all levels, there is little difference between the results of boys and girls.
148. In work seen, attainment by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is well above national expectations, and at the highest levels. In Year 9, for example, most pupils can recognise how tourism can have positive and negative consequences in different sorts of area. Detailed notes are a strength, as are diagrams, particularly of river and weather processes. There is a broad range of written styles and, for example, when given the opportunity, most pupils can write sensitively from the perspectives of people living in Kenya or Japan. Some group activities produce interesting writing, such as wall displays on Mediterranean fruits. At Key Stage 4, again the quality of notes and diagrams is very high, and numeracy skills are securely used for presenting a variety of graphs and statistical information. The coursework is highly individual to each pupil, and covers a very wide range of topics, such as a detailed analysis of Cheltenham's Park and Ride services, a pollution survey of the River Chelt, a comparison of housing quality in different parts of Cheltenham, and the impact of the Tewkesbury by-pass. The best studies present data accurately, using a wide range of techniques, including computers; there are valid conclusions with careful analysis. Attainment by the end of the A-level course is well above national expectations. Oral contributions are of a high intellectual content. Concepts such as core and periphery

are well understood in the context of government and European intervention policies. Although many pupils at all stages make very effective use of computers, as yet there is little whole-class use of computers in geography.

149. Progress is good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. Much of the good progress is related to pupils' strong listening skills, and their willingness to work hard and concentrate on the task in hand. Progress is also particularly good when tasks involve active learning, as in one lesson when pupils, working in pairs, linked climatic information in an atlas to characteristics of farming in different parts of Britain. In some lessons, when work was insufficiently matched to the abilities and needs of all pupils, there was less progress. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, a minority struggled to understand grid references, whilst others, already very familiar with them, marked time. In individual lessons at Key Stage 4, progress can be very good when research work gives opportunities for all abilities to work at their maximum potential. Good progress in response to the challenging pace of lessons and opportunities for research is also seen at A-level. Progress at A-level can be less rapid and less secure when new concepts do not sufficiently build on prior learning, making a difficult topic appear even more complex.
150. The pupils' responses are very good overall. In all lessons, they are either good or very good, with a higher proportion of very good responses at Key Stage 4. Behaviour is very good in nearly all lessons, with very good relationships between pupils and with the teacher. In one Key Stage 3 lesson, a little silliness crept in, but, usually, the majority show interest and maintain concentration. At Key Stage 4, nearly all remain on task, despite, on occasions, having to listen to the teacher for a long time. At A-level, all are interested and work willingly, enjoying the intellectual challenges.
151. Teaching is good at all stages and is never less than satisfactory. All teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. The main strength is teachers' expert subject knowledge. They give clear explanations, often at a high intellectual level. Most lessons are well planned with a good range of activities and good pace. Good use is made of extensive resources in most lessons. Sometimes, not all pupils are actively involved because teaching methods are limited, with a tendency for teachers to talk too much. There are some missed opportunities to let pupils find out information for themselves, as teachers often present information without the chance to exploit pupils' curiosity and deductive skills. When teachers do give such opportunities, pupils respond very well and produce excellent work. Particularly at A-level, the timing and structure of lessons are not always tight enough, so that there is a tendency for lessons to go off at tangents to the detriment of progress and some understanding.
152. Geography has made sound progress since the last inspection and has moved forward with its schemes of work and assessment arrangements. There have been developments in the use of computers, though still not yet in a systematic way for all pupils, and there is now a greater emphasis on investigative work and active learning, including paired and group work. However, not all opportunities are taken to promote independent learning skills nor to encourage the most able to stretch themselves to maximum potential. The best practice of high quality fieldwork at A-level and preparation of pupils for their GCSE coursework illustrates what is already possible in the subject in the school. The head of subject gives good, clear direction to the subject. Despite recent problems of illness, a great strength of the subject is its team of very experienced and committed teachers.
152.     **History**
153. Attainment in history in both national tests and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above that expected of pupils of similar age nationally. At GCSE, results are well above the average for all schools and significantly above the results in selective schools. In 1998, 96.2 per cent of the candidates achieved grades A\* to C and of those, 66.25 per cent were awarded A\* or A. At A-level, results were well above the national average and also above the level of results achieved in similar schools, with 76 per cent of students achieving A or B grades. The school has produced consistently good results at both GCSE and A-level in recent years with a significant upward trend in the number of A\* and A grades at GCSE and higher grades at A-level. In 1999, 62 per cent of candidates were awarded A\* or A grades, and at A-level 52 per cent of candidates out of a total of 23 were awarded A grades.

154. The study of history begins with work on aspects of life in the Roman Empire. The work of pupils in Year 7 shows that they have developed a secure foundation for their work in history and they are already able to distinguish between fact and opinion and to use a range of sources. They are able to evaluate extracts from various source materials including eye witness accounts of significant events; for example the destruction of Pompeii and aspects of the reign of Augustus. In Year 8, pupils studying the Tudors were able to understand complex issues related to the dissolution of the monasteries and they were observed making sophisticated judgements about the validity of the traditional view of the reign of Mary Tudor. Older pupils acquire a very good knowledge of the key events and developments in history such as the social impact of the Industrial Revolution and the causes of the conflicts of this century. By the end of Year 9, they are skilled in the use of documents and have a very good grasp of chronology. Written work in all year groups is usually very well presented and the history rooms are used for displays of pupils' work rather than displays of commercially produced material. Some evidence was seen of pupils' skills in word processing and other aspects of information technology - for example in the production of articles related to the Black Death. Individual pupils have very good skills in computer-based research and word processing.
155. Work is very good at both GCSE and A-level with pupils showing that they have both a detailed knowledge of the periods that they are studying and the high level of skills in essay and document work which will help them to succeed. In GCSE classes, pupils approached their work with confidence and enthusiasm. They are generally very articulate and base their ideas and judgements on sound knowledge and understanding of the events of the twentieth century and a careful study of extracts and source material. Students in A-level classes respond well to specific tasks in preparation for classroom discussion and they consult a wide range of books in the planning and writing of essays. The quality of most essay and document work at advanced level is very high and all work seen was at least of a satisfactory standard.
156. Progress is very good in all year groups. Younger pupils were observed making very good progress in the use of extracts and in the development of skills in research and the evaluation of evidence. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a very secure grasp of all aspects of the study of history. Those who choose to take the subject at GCSE make very good progress in the acquisition of the knowledge content of the course and in developing skills in answering questions and completing course work. Students also make very good progress in A-level work. They acquire an impressive depth of knowledge in detailed studies of aspects of British history. They are also able to understand and evaluate broad trends across a longer period, for example the impact of the Reformation, or of the decline of the Ottoman Empire.
157. Pupils respond very well to their work in history and an increasing number of pupils are choosing to study the subject at a higher level. They take great pride in their work which is very well presented. Younger pupils enjoy the variety of activities which include discussion, drama and imaginative writing, as well as visits to historic sites such as the battlefields in Belgium or more local visits to Gloucester Cathedral or Goodrich Castle. In examination classes, pupils respond to the intellectual challenge of the subject. They develop an ability to evaluate evidence and use it to acquire a real understanding of the role of the great leaders and decision-makers of the past.
158. Teaching is good at each key stage, and in the sixth form. Teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching and learning. They are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject, and have developed a skills-based approach which enables pupils to enjoy their work and also acquire an impressive amount of knowledge. The quality and variety of resources and classroom activities provide a real challenge for most pupils. This was particularly apparent in the examination classes observed. However, in some classes lower down the school, there was a lack of pace, and an absence of work to excite the interest of the very highest attainers. Lessons were usually well planned and resourced. The best lessons had clear objectives which focused on what younger pupils and examination students should know by the end of the lesson. Work is marked frequently and assessment is used effectively, especially in the very careful monitoring of work which makes a considerable contribution to pupil progress. Teachers make very good use of homework, and this makes a very good contribution to progress.

159. Resources are satisfactory and their effective use makes an important contribution to the high standards observed. The subject makes a good contribution the development of skills in literacy because of the focus on reading comprehension and a wide variety of written tasks. At present, information technology is not used in teaching and the department does not contribute well to progress in this area.
160. The management of the subject is the responsibility of an experienced teacher who has co-ordinated staff across year groups to ensure that learning in history is well managed. The strong team ethos of the department ensures that resources and assessment procedures are effectively used to ensure progression and continuity. The development of assessment procedures and the monitoring of results are indications of the good quality of management which has ensured the maintenance of consistently high standards of attainment in history since the previous inspection.
160. **Information technology**
161. The previous report stated that standards of pupils' achievement at Key Stage 3 were commensurate with their age and ability. At Key Stage 4, standards were judged to be in line with national expectations, but below average when judged against pupils' abilities. At that time, these pupils had not had Key Stage 3 experience in the subject.
162. Currently, all pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 have been assessed by the school on projects done during their first three years at school, and have all been assigned Level 6, which is above average for their age. This does not fully account for the very able pupils. Inspection evidence agrees with the assessment at the end of Key Stage 3, but also shows that a significant number of pupils have skills which are well above average. By the end of Year 8, pupils have very good word-processing skills, are able to produce posters using desktop publishing, advertising their fashion shows, for example. They use spreadsheets to model different factors affecting the profit made by an imaginary furniture manufacturer. There is no assessment of skills beyond this since the school does not follow any form of public examination or accreditation course in Key Stage 4. Some parents view this absence as a weakness in provision. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 have well above average skills and sufficient competency to use information technology as a tool in all areas of the curriculum. Sophisticated software is used to present brochures advertising companies, for example, as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Attainment at A-S level is well above average with students gaining high grades. They have very good knowledge of the theory of computing, and some very good project work was seen, for example, one to provide a useful revision guide for A-level chemistry.
163. All pupils make good progress enabling them to use information technology across the curriculum, the most common use being in course work. Word-processing and desktop publishing were seen many times in English lessons, for example. In science, students use information technology to a high level in the sixth form, plotting advanced graphs and using data logging during experimental work. They have made good contributions to the intranet with, for example, an amusing but informative description of a day in the life of a red blood cell. CD-ROM material is used well in physical education for A-level anatomy and physiology, and sports psychology. In business studies and economics, students' competent use of information technology includes spreadsheets and scanner for advertising projects. Very good use of information technology was seen in design and technology, where in Year 8, pupils were designing bridges using a computer assisted design program, and in Year 11 where they were designing electronic circuits. Pupils make good progress in using library computers for research with CD-ROM material
164. Pupils have a mature attitude to information technology. They realise its importance as an aid to their studies, particularly in research and presentation. They have a very responsible attitude to learning and take the initiative to further their studies themselves. Even younger ones make sure they catch up with their work to ensure they are ready for the next lesson in information technology skills. They work together well and readily help those who are less confident.
165. Teaching is good, and often very good, during lessons and club sessions which take place every lunchtime. Teachers in information technology lessons have very good knowledge and expertise and

devise realistic, and often humorous projects to engage their pupils, for example, to design a poster with an amusing description to advertise the sale of an old information technology teacher. Expectations are high and pupils respond accordingly, never considering producing shoddy work. A good variety of projects is used but execution is usually the same, with pupils carrying out the practical work after a demonstration, usually through the network. A particular strength is the use of teacher and instructor during lessons: two adults, therefore, offer more technical help enabling better progress to be made by all pupils. Pupils are expected to do homework. Those who do not have a computer at home are able to access one in the club sessions.

166. The scheme of work is good, covering all aspects of the National Curriculum programme of study, but the curriculum is not wide enough in Year 9 to allow pupils to consolidate and further their skills, and for valid end of key stage assessments to be made in all strands.

167. The head of department is very knowledgeable and leads the subject very well. His expertise is well respected by all. He is well supported by the head of lower school science who is in charge of the school's website. This is a useful form of communication with parents, for example, giving term dates and details of school trips. The inclusion of the prospectus is useful for advertising the school.

168. Accommodation and resources are very good in the dedicated computer rooms. The library and careers room also have very good resources, and there are useful – though older – network resources in science, design and technology, and all departments have access to one or two computers in their own areas. They are able to book the dedicated computer rooms, and pupils go in there on their own when they are free. However, this is becoming inadequate because of the increased specialist usage, and the needs of the sixth form. Although resources are used efficiently, the actual number of computers available to pupils is too low for a school of this size.

168. **Latin**

169. The school offers pupils, from Year 9, a three-year extra-curricular Latin course which provides very good linguistic and cultural enrichment. Comparatively large numbers of pupils take advantage of these lessons at lunchtime and after school.

170. GCSE results in Latin in 1999 are very high: all candidates who sat the examination gained A\* to C grades, with the majority achieving A\* or A. There were very small numbers of sixth-form candidates in 1997 and 1998: all achieved at least A grades. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is above the expected level. The pupils rapidly become familiar with simple grammatical concepts, using and recognising case endings and tenses competently. They have good recall of the work they have covered, and develop sufficient linguistic resources, both in Latin and in English, to cope well with the translation of extended passages of Latin. Their writing in Latin shows good levels of accuracy and grammatical control.

171. The teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and the quality of their teaching is good. They establish sound learning habits and expectations, ensuring the systematic learning of new vocabulary and structures, and enabling the pupils to acquire sufficient understanding of grammar, and sufficient skill in using it through a good blend of study and practice. Planning is good, and tasks are set which are well matched to the needs of their motivated, high attaining pupils.

172. The course is well managed and well resourced, although the lack of formal budgetary arrangements makes long-term planning difficult. The accommodation is very good for a few of the lessons, but the timetabling of many of the classes in a science laboratory is unsatisfactory.

172. **Modern foreign languages**

173. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national expectation. In the 1998 and 1999 end of Key

Stage 3 teachers' assessments, all pupils reach or exceed the expected level. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is above average. Pupils acquire a confident knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structure, writing simply, but confidently, in French and in German. Their reading and listening comprehension are good, and they adopt an intelligent approach to language learning, often successfully using contextual and other linguistic clues to make informed guesses about meaning.

174. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national expectation. 1998 and 1999 GCSE results in French and German were well above average for both maintained and selective schools; both boys and girls tend to do better in GCSE French and German than in the other subjects they take. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is well above average. Reading and listening comprehension skills are very well developed by the end of the key stage, although some pupils unnecessarily translate a reading passage into English before answering comprehension questions - a consequence of an overly analytical approach to teaching the language. Pupils write fluently and confidently, using a very good range of vocabulary and structure, and some good examples of very competent extended writing were seen. Somewhat diffident orally, pupils at Key Stage 4 respond appropriately when required, in mainly correct models of French and German. By the end of the key stage, most pupils respond very well, using past and future tenses with a good degree of accuracy, notably in German, where they have a good feel for word order and inversion.
175. Attainment at the end of the sixth form is above the national expectation. The proportion of students gaining A and B grades in the 1998 and 1999 A-level examinations in French and German is above average. Trends over recent years have been consistently high, although a greater proportion of students gain A and B grades in German than in French. A very few students sit AS examinations successfully in French or in German. Sixth-form students following a one-year GCSE course in Spanish, all achieve A\*-C grades. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is above the national average, although the sample observed was restricted because most Year 13 modern language students were undertaking work experience in Germany during the inspection. Students begin their A-level courses with a high level of basic linguistic competence, and soon develop the ability to deal confidently with more complex language. By Year 13, they have a very good understanding of the foreign language spoken fluently. They read confidently, with good understanding. They respond well and participate effectively in discussions. They speak reasonably fluently, although their grammatical control is less secure when discussion is open-ended. They write confidently and with a sound level of competence both in informal work in class – note-taking for example – and in more extended written work.
- 175.
176. Progress is good at Key Stage 3, although there are occasional examples, in both French and German, where progress is no more than satisfactory: this is where there is insufficient pace and challenge for high attaining pupils, and consequently not enough ground is covered in the lesson, in terms of both content and skills. Pupils make very good progress at Key Stage 4 in developing competence and confidence in using more complex linguistic structures, and in the skills of listening, reading and writing; speaking skills develop more slowly because teachers do not require and expect pupils to use the foreign language consistently in lessons. Good progress is made in the sixth form by A-level and AS students, who cope well with the more complex, open-ended situations which study at this level demands. Progress in German is slightly better than in French. Sixth-form students preparing for GCSE Spanish in one year make very good, rapid progress. Pupils at both key stages and students in the sixth form make good progress in listening, reading and writing; more progress could be made in fluent oral use if this important skill were practised more frequently. There is no appreciable difference in the relative progress of boys and girls. The few pupils with special educational needs make at least good progress.
- 176.
176. The pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and excellent in the sixth form. Pupils and students come to lessons prepared to work hard, and are very keen to succeed. They give their work full concentration and most behave impeccably – no examples were seen of poor behaviour. Attitudes to learning languages are very positive, and evidence of this can be seen in the large numbers of pupils continuing the study of two foreign languages at Key Stage 4. In addition, healthy numbers of sixth formers opt to study French and/or German at A-level, or to start GCSE Spanish from scratch. The pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and their well-developed powers of concentration are significant contributory factors in the good progress they make.



177. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the languages they teach, and are able to use the foreign language confidently and accurately as the main language of the lesson. Most have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve, especially intellectually, but their expectations of a high level of oral performance are modest, with some exceptions in German. They do not regularly, for example, expect and obtain longer answers in the foreign language than a simple response; nor do they extend the pupils orally by setting challenging speaking tasks as a regular feature of lessons. Apart from this, they structure lessons to ensure pupils can practise and gain mastery of new language. They explain very clearly, and use whole-class, group, pair, and individual tasks to suit the nature and stage of the work, and the high ability of the pupils. They maintain good relationships with the pupils through a judicious balance of challenge, encouragement, deserved praise and guidance which genuinely helps them to make good progress. Relationships with sixth-form students are warm, purposeful and productive. Marking is variable: at best, it is thorough and helpful, but this is not always the case, and examples were seen of cursory marking, with little indication of what the pupil needs to do to improve his or her work. Some good examples of very helpful sixth-form marking were seen in German. Appropriate homework is set regularly, as a planned development of the lesson, or a necessary part of preparation for the next stage of learning.
178. The curriculum in modern languages meets statutory requirements and offers considerable breadth at all key stages. The proportion of curriculum time allocated is generous; this contributes significantly to high attainment and the high numbers of pupils continuing to study two foreign languages beyond Key Stage 3. There is a good range of exchanges and study visits which offer valuable cultural, social and linguistic enrichment. Schemes of work are inadequate, and do not provide clear guidance on the development of linguistic skills. The improvement of subject documentation was a whole-school key issue at the last inspection, and remains to be tackled successfully. All other issues raised by the last inspection have been dealt with, but adequate improvement has yet to be made in all areas, in particular in the provision of sufficient opportunities for pupils to participate fully in speaking tasks. Regular assessment takes place appropriately, but the use of assessment data is not yet fully used to track the progress of pupils, and to set realistic targets, in particular to extend the most able pupils. Accommodation and resources are very good. There is a very positive ethos for learning, stemming from a strong commitment to high achievement, and to good, productive relationships between teachers, and between pupils and teachers.
179. **Music**
179. GCSE results at A\*-C in 1998 were very high compared both with similar schools and with all maintained schools. The proportion of students attaining A\* grades was very high. In 1999, all students attained passes within the range A\*-C and again a very high proportion obtained A\* grades, significantly improving on the 1998 results. Some caution is necessary in considering these excellent results as the numbers involved are not large, for example, 14 candidates in 1999.
180. At A-level in 1998, one student entered and obtained a grade A pass. In 1999, of eight students entered, two obtained B passes, three C passes and one D pass. While reflecting credit on individuals, these numbers are insufficient for meaningful comparisons with national figures to be made.
181. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Most Year 9 pupils can read and perform from notation on classroom instruments and keyboards at higher than expected standards. They understand how to construct melodies and chords and utilise them in better than average compositions, making use of devices such as sequence, and showing a good grasp of dynamics and technical terms. They are familiar with a good range of composers and styles, and use appropriate vocabulary to describe them.
182. In this school, a large number of pupils (18 per cent) enhance their musical attainment with additional instrumental studies, and many attain very high standards in Associated Board examinations.
183. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is well above average. Students have very good performing skills and a very good grasp of compositional techniques, for example form, harmony, and instrumentation.

Year 11 aural work, sight reading and score reading are of a good standard. Historical knowledge of periods, composers and styles is very good. At the end of the sixth form, attainment is well above average. Students have very good knowledge and understanding of advanced harmony and compositional techniques derived from the practice of great composers. They follow and analyse full scores of works such as Schubert's 8th Symphony. Performances are technically accomplished and musically sensitive, for example, a performance of Bach's Fantasy in C minor by a talented pianist. Knowledge of history, composers, works and styles is of appropriate depth and rigour.

184. Further opportunities to enhance attainment in music occur in the many extra-curricular groups which are well supported by around 260 students. The first orchestra, of some 40 students, plays well music of the calibre of, for instance, 'Nimrod' by Elgar, with good tone and musicianship. The choir, rehearsing in the hall and supported on the organ, sings Barnby's 'Crossing the Bar' quite beautifully and movingly. The Big Band working on jazz pieces gives a very neat, crisp and swinging account of 'The Long and the Short of It'.
185. Pupils' progress over Key Stage 3 is good. Year 7 pupils make good progress rehearsing 'White Rose of Athens' on classroom instruments until tune and harmony are played successfully. Pupils make rapid gains in accuracy of playing and sensitivity of performance, building on previously learned knowledge of scales, and progress is good. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress
186. Pupils' progress across Key Stage 4 is very good. In Year 11 they make rapid progress consolidating knowledge of Bach's style and the Baroque period, advancing their score reading skills and ability to focus aurally, listening for particular effects, such as form, flute and continuo, and counter melodies. Student progress in the sixth form is excellent. For example, students develop excellent solutions to a question requiring them to harmonise sections of a string quartet in the style of Mozart, consolidating knowledge of chords, progression of parts and stylistic characteristics.
187. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development at all stages are excellent. Pupils are interested in the subject and there is a good take up for GCSE and A-level. Personal study habits are well developed and behaviour is extremely good. Pupils are exceptionally courteous to each other and to adults.
188. The quality of teaching at each key stage is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding and highly developed musical skills. They have high and appropriate expectations, but go to great lengths to ensure that ideas are thoroughly understood. Methods which rely heavily on talk are sometimes tedious, and would be all the better for more illustration or a change of activity. However, pupils in this school respond positively to lectures and absorb information rapidly and accurately. The new director of music provides very good, clear leadership for the department. All staff have a high level of commitment to the busy extra-curricular programme. Teaching in the instrumental lessons observed was of a high standard, and the provision is well organised, and is well supported by the governing body.
189. Since the previous inspection, high standards of attainment and progress have been maintained. The outstanding area of improvement has been the new music accommodation. There are now adequate practice studios and two good sized classrooms. However, storage is a problem and the present solutions impinge on classroom space. Sadly, the practice studios are not sound proof, and sound from instrumental lessons is highly audible in the main classrooms. This is particularly distracting for students endeavouring to concentrate on complex examination listening questions. Timetable provision for Year 9, criticised in the last report, is now satisfactory. There have been some improvements to the quantity and quality of classroom instruments, but comparatively little progress in the development of information technology. Criticisms made in the 1995 report about too much teacher centred work, and the need to engage pupils of all abilities, have been addressed and staff are aware of the need to vary approaches and activities.

#### 190. **Physical education**

190. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is well above average. In dance, pupils receive imaginative

challenges from teachers and produce very high quality performances and levels of oral presentation. Planning and evaluation by pupils are also excellent with much original work emerging. Where attainment is very good in gymnastics, pupils show ability to control their body weight and to exhibit the tension and style which are central to good gymnastic performance. In games, where attainment is invariably good, pupils show strong basic skills in hockey, basketball and rugby. It is disappointing that there is no opportunity for pupils to gain accreditation at Key Stage 4 where attainment is high. Very high attainment was seen in basketball where students have advanced techniques and thorough understanding of rules and tactics. In badminton and basketball, students are confident in their appreciation of rules and application of strategies. Attainment in the sixth form is similarly high. Students following the A-level physical education course produce very good written work and discuss theoretical aspects of the subject confidently and with sophisticated vocabulary. This course is new and the first results are expected in the summer of 2000. Standards in work seen during the inspection are very high.

191. In Key Stage 3, progress is very good. On occasion, it is excellent in gymnastics and dance with marked improvement of control and quality of work within lessons. Complex dance sequences are produced and analysed and this applies across the whole ability range in classes. Good progress was observed in games where application of tactics becomes considerably enhanced. At Key Stage 4, pupils are making very good progress in racket skills at badminton, in catching and passing skills in basketball and in applying systems of play. In the sixth form, progress is very good in theoretical aspects of the A-level course, and levels of student participation in lessons are very high.
192. Attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Pupils show remarkable ability to concentrate on tasks and to apply themselves diligently. Whenever teachers request collaboration, pupils respond unfailingly, co-operating fully over extended periods and producing some remarkable outcomes in lessons. Pupils are very highly motivated and all participate with obvious and sustained enjoyment and enthusiasm. There is very little non-participation and pupils are always immaculately turned out.
193. Teaching is very good across the school, and subject knowledge is a considerable strength. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles which allow pupils to take responsibility, show initiative, and to be creative. As a result, pupils are adept at planning and evaluating their work, and good progress has been made in this aspect of the National Curriculum which was criticised at the previous inspection.
194. Subject leadership is very good in many respects, but curriculum planning is unsatisfactory. This is because the Key Stage 3 programme for boys does not include the four programmes of study required by the National Curriculum. The programme for girls fulfils this requirement and is well balanced.
195. There is a very good programme of extra-curricular opportunities for boys and girls which is well supported by pupils and sustained with very good support from other staff outside the department. There is emphasis on team games, where pupils' involvement is extensive and standards are very high, both for teams and individuals.
196. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress in fulfilling the planning and evaluation strands of the National Curriculum attainment target. It has sustained high standards across the school, and successfully introduced A-level examination work. However, the curriculum weakness in the boys' Key Stage 3 programme restricts the overall judgement on progress since the previous inspection to satisfactory.
197. **Politics**
197. Politics is taught at A-level and students have achieved consistently high grades in recent years. These results compare very favourably with other subjects in the school and with those achieved in similar schools nationally. In the 1999 examinations, 63 per cent of candidates were awarded A or B grades and there was a 100 per cent pass rate. In 1997, all students passed and 17 out of the total 23 students were awarded A or B grades. No students took the examination in 1998.

198. In the lessons observed, students showed that they were able to understand political theory - for example in an analysis of totalitarianism. Year 12 students are able to evaluate factors which affect political development in the present - such as the changes in parliamentary procedures made by the present government. The written work seen was of a good standard showing that students are able to answer questions on complex political issues with a confidence based on secure knowledge and understanding. Progress is very good, with students quickly establishing appropriate research skills and the level of interpretation and analysis that are required for success in this subject. Students enjoy their work and contribute to discussions with enthusiasm. They also benefit from and enjoy using a wide range of quality text books, library and video resources.
199. Teaching observed was good. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and are able to employ a variety of teaching strategies to ensure that work is exciting and relevant. They provide students with the opportunity to consider a wide range of topics and they are also very effective in teaching the skills in analysis and in essay writing which are essential for success at A-level. The subject is well managed as part of the history department, and staff and resources are deployed very effectively to ensure progress.
200. **Religious education**
200. Results of those taking GCSE in 1998 were exceptionally high, though those at A-level were lower overall than others in the school. However, numbers taking religious education recently have been too small to draw any reliable statistical conclusions.
201. In work seen, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above expectations. Because the amount of work covered is limited, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to attain fully across each of the attainment targets of the Gloucestershire Agreed Syllabus, with the majority of written work related to learning about religion. However, there are very high levels of attainment from many pupils in a range of writing such as imagining living in the wilderness for six weeks, an obituary for Ghandi, and accounts of 'What I think God is like'. Factual information about Christianity and other religions is also of a high standard. There is little difference in attainment between boys and girls at Key Stage 3, or at other stages.
202. There is little formal written work in the course taken by all pupils at Key Stage 4 in two blocks, one of ten weeks in Year 10 and one of eight weeks in Year 11. In work seen in this course, attainment is above expectations. The best oral contributions are of a high quality with perceptive comments, for example, on the hypocrisy in the ways some people treat the elderly. Group tasks brought out analytical skills in weighing up arguments for and against an elderly person coming to live with the rest of the family. In the GCSE course, attainment is well above national expectations. Pupils show a good understanding of, and can express opinions about, contemporary issues from a Christian perspective. At A-level, attainment is well above national expectations. Several students argue logically, and show good understanding of ethical theories.
203. Progress at Key Stage 3, the GCSE course at Key Stage 4, and at A-level is good. In the course taken by all pupils at Key Stage 4, progress is satisfactory overall, but the lack of continuity between the Year 10 and Year 11 units hinders progression. At Key Stage 3, in one lesson, for example, pupils made good progress in developing their thinking about symbolism in the Hindu religion. Notebooks show good progress in knowledge about aspects of Jesus' life and work. At Key Stage 4, progress in individual lessons can show thoughtful, sensitive and mature development of ideas. At GCSE, a clear timescale on tasks, and the teacher's taking pupils' thinking forward rapidly, makes for very good progress. In one A-level lesson, constant interaction between the students themselves and with the teacher made for very good progress intellectually, and in the overall understanding of difficult theories.
204. The pupils' responses are very good. At Key Stage 3 and the general course at Key Stage 4, they are good. In the GCSE course, they are very good, and they are excellent in the A-level group. Lively, good-humoured discussion, and good collaboration in pairs and group work, are characteristics of pupils'

responses. In one lesson, there were notably good relationships between boys and girls in the mixed gender groups set up by the teacher. At A-level, nearly all students contribute with much enthusiasm to the excellent stimulating exchanges.

205. Teaching is very good. It is good at Key Stage 3, and very good at Key Stage 4 and at A-level. At Key Stage 3, there is expert teacher knowledge. High quality questioning stimulates pupils' thinking; there is good pace and varied activities, including reading, drawing and use of video extracts. In a very good lesson at Key Stage 4, high quality teacher understanding enabled pertinent questions to be asked, biblical passages to be linked, and stimulating discussion to take place. The teacher brought out the best in the pupils, carefully blending her expertise with high expectations of what the pupils could do themselves. In a very good A-level lesson, the teacher confidently handled discussion of complex ethical issues, again achieving a good balance between her own input and giving opportunities for students' participation. There was a strong intellectual slant, but not in a dry stuffy way. The democratic approach to learning was very successful, allowing genuine and full participation. However, the teacher moved things on at the right moments, giving a fast flowing lesson with variety and interest.
206. Religious education has made some progress since the last inspection. However, it is a small department, working in relative isolation, and the subject is not given anywhere near the time recommended in the agreed syllabus. Consequently, the subject cannot make the contribution to the educational experiences of pupils in the school that it is potentially capable of making, despite the high quality of work that is taking place. Statutory requirements are not met at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form, although a number of speakers within the sixth-form general studies programme, provide a valuable range of opportunities for students to engage in religious, ethical and philosophical issues. Within the limitations imposed on it, religious education is very well taught and very well led; it enjoys good resources and very good accommodation. It makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

207. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

207. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

207. The inspection was conducted by a team of 12 inspectors. The inspection covered all National Curriculum subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4 together with the range of sixth form academic provision. In addition, one inspector reviewed the quality of pastoral provision and guidance, including careers education, together with tutor periods, registrations, assemblies and extra-curricular activities.
208. More than 53 inspector days were spent in the school, 185 lessons were inspected, and over 161 hours were spent in lessons. Many hours were spent inspecting samples of pupils' work, in discussion with pupils, and in other observations of the work of the school. All staff timetabled for teaching and present during the inspection were seen teaching and received reports on the grading of lessons taught by them.
209. Meetings were held with the governing body before and after the inspection. Interviews were held with the headteacher and other senior staff, all head of departments, and with other staff in posts of responsibility. Four evening meetings of the inspection team were held during the inspection week, and the conclusions of the report represent the collective views of the team.
210. Before the inspection, 487 parents completed and returned questionnaires sent to them by the school, and the registered inspector held a meeting attended by 78 parents. Views expressed by parents in writing, and raised at the meeting, were noted and fully taken into account by the inspectors.

## 211. DATA AND INDICATORS

### 211. Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	911	2	26	9

### 211. Teachers and classes

#### 211. Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	59.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	15.3

#### 211. Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff:	15
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	411

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	78.96
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Average teaching group size:	KS2	
	KS3	25.1
	KS4	20.1

### 211. Financial data

Financial year:	1999
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Total Income	3,116,108
Total Expenditure	3,171,738
Expenditure per pupil	2,906
Balance brought forward from previous year	311,944
Balance carried forward to next year	256,314

211. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 911

Number of questionnaires returned: 487

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	12	61	19	6	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	30	55	8	7	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	15	44	34	6	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	15	58	19	7	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	33	56	7	3	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	61	37	2	1	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	39	52	7	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	32	61	3	4	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	37	49	11	2	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	38	53	7	2	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	47	46	5	2	0