

INSPECTION REPORT

CHELTENHAM BOURNSIDE SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Cheltenham

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique Reference Number: 115769

Headteacher: Mr A G Stafford

Reporting inspector: Mr D P Cox
10297

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708121

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Gloucestershire LEA
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R T Henderson
Date of previous inspection:	February 1995

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Jo Illingworth, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development. Attendance. Support, guidance and students' welfare. Partnership with parents and community. Efficiency of the school Assessment
Ian Kirby	Music	
Ann Axon	Equality of opportunity	
Bernard Treacy	Mathematics	
Ray Woodhouse	English	
Ian Thompson	Science	Curriculum
Michael Lafford	Design and technology	Staffing
John Laver	Modern foreign languages	Learning resources
Tim Wright	History	Accommodation
Clifford Blakemore	Art	
	Geography	
	Business studies and economics	
	Sixth form provision	
	Non National Curriculum subjects at Key Stage 4	
Shirley Jeffray	Physical education	
Alan Skelton	Religious education	Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Graham Todd	Special educational needs	
Cheryl Jackson	Sixth-form provision	

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The school enables most students to make good progress in their learning so that they attain high standards in national tests and examinations.
- Students' attitudes, behaviour and their relationships with others are all very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall.
- Teachers give freely of their time to organise an excellent range of extra-curricular activities with sport being a real strength of the school.
- Students' moral and social development is very good.
- Students are well cared for; teachers monitor their progress and personal development well.
- The school's partnership with parents and the community is very good.
- Leadership and management of the school are very good.
- The school is a very efficient organisation.
- The school provides very good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Students make unsatisfactory progress in information technology at Key Stage 4 because they do not receive their full National Curriculum entitlement in information technology and the quality of teaching of information technology at this key stage is unsatisfactory.
- II. Boys' progress in physical education at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory because they do not receive their full National Curriculum entitlement to the dance part of the Programmes of Study.
- III. The provision for religious education in the sixth form is unsatisfactory because there is no provision for all students to study religious education.

The school has far more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. This plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of students at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made good progress since the previous report. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and high standards of attainment have been maintained. Under the leadership of the headteacher, the senior management team and the governing body, most of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have been overcome. Given the improvements made, the quality of leadership provided by the headteacher, the governing body and the senior management team, the school is very well placed to continue its improvement.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 19-year-olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
Key Stage 3 Tests	A	A	<i>well above average</i>
			<i>above average</i>
			<i>average</i>
GCSE Examinations	A	B	<i>below average</i>
A/AS – levels	C ¹	N/A	<i>well below average</i>

In National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, results in English, mathematics and science were well above the national average. Overall, students' results in English and mathematics were well above average in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds and they were above in science.

In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-C was above the national average. The proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-G was well above the national average. The total GCSE points score per student was well above the national average when compared with all schools. When compared with schools with students from similar backgrounds, results were above average. Students' best overall results, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were in art and religious education. The poorest results were in information technology, music and physical education.

In the 1999 GCE A-level examinations, results were in line with the national average. In GNVQ business intermediate, two candidates achieved distinction and two a pass, which represents an improvement in the quality of grades on 1998. This does not represent a decline in standards in the sixth form but reflects the significant change to the cohort of students in the sixth form compared to that at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Very good	English, mathematics and science	Information technology
Years 10-11	Good	Art	Information technology
Sixth form	Very Good	English, art and economics	Information technology
English	Very good	N/A	N/A
Mathematics	Very good	N/A	N/A

¹ This does not represent a decline in standards in the sixth form but reflects the significant change to the cohort of students in the sixth form compared to that at Key Stages 3 and 4.

The quality of teaching in the school is very good overall. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and at sixth-form level and it is good at Key Stage 4.

At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 68 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 31 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons and is rarely poor. The quality of teaching is very good in English, mathematics, science, art, modern foreign languages and religious education; good in design and technology, geography, history, music, physical education and satisfactory in information technology.

At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 65 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 20 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in seven per cent of lessons and is rarely poor. The quality of teaching is very good in physical education, examination course for religious education and business studies; good in all other subjects with the exception of information technology where it is unsatisfactory.

At sixth-form level, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 75 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 31 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in two per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is very good in English, science, art, modern foreign languages, physical education, examination course for religious education and GCE A-level economics; good in mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, music, business studies, sociology and GNVQ courses and satisfactory in information technology.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Students' behaviour is very good in and around the school.
Attendance	Students' attendance and punctuality to lessons are good.
Ethos*	The ethos of the school is excellent. There is a real commitment to high standards within a supportive pastoral system.
Leadership and management	The quality of leadership and management within the school is very good. The headteacher, the senior management team and the governors all provide very good leadership.
Curriculum	The curriculum is good although all statutory requirements are not met fully.
Students with special educational needs	Good provision is made for students with special educational needs and these students make similar progress to other students.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good overall, with moral and social development being very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory overall; a well qualified teaching staff but there are insufficient information technology facilities.
Value for money	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

- IV. Students attain good examination results.
- V. Students' attitudes are very good.
- VI. The help and guidance that students receive is very good.
- VII. Students' behaviour and attendance are very good.
- VIII. Excellent extra-curricular provision.

What some parents are not happy about

- IX. The quantity of homework that is set is

The inspectors agree with the parents' very positive comments about the school. Students do attain good standards and often very good standards of attainment. Students' attitudes are very good and they receive very good guidance and advice. Students behave very well in and around the school. A strength of the school is the extra-curricular provision, particularly sport. The inspectors found little evidence to support the parents' concerns about homework. Homework is normally relevant to the topic being covered and is set appropriately.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

- X. Improve students' progress in information technology at Key Stage 4 by:
 - XI. ensuring all students receive their full National Curriculum entitlement in information technology (paras 54, 98 and 190);
 - XII. ensuring that all subjects build information technology into their schemes of work and teach the appropriate Programme of Study (paras 190 and 193);
 - XIII. improving the quality of leadership and management of information technology by introducing more systematic monitoring and evaluation of information technology (paras 93 and 193);
 - XIV. when funding becomes available, improving the information technology facilities within the school (paras 193 and 110);
 - XV. improving the quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 (para 192).

- XVI. Improving boys' progress in physical education at Key Stage 3 by ensuring that they receive their full National Curriculum entitlement, including dance (paras 29, 54 and 218).

- XVII. Improving the provision for religious education in the sixth form (paras 31, 54 and 69).

· **Other weaknesses**

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

- XVIII. providing a daily act of collective worship (paras 69 and 98);
- XIX. improving the system for monitoring the curriculum (para 96).

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Cheltenham Bournside School and Sixth-Form Centre is a maintained 11 – 18 mixed comprehensive school with 1636 students on roll: 823 boys and 813 girls. There are 418 students in the sixth form. There were 1572 students on roll at the time of the previous inspection. The number of students in the sixth form has fallen because of the changes to the sixth-form provision in Cheltenham. The school is located on the southern edge of Cheltenham. The sixth-form centre receives students from not only Bournside but also draws students from a number of schools within the town and the neighbouring area. Nearly 40 per cent of the students in the sixth form come from other schools. The school is much bigger than most other secondary schools. The school was a locally managed school within the Gloucestershire Education Authority until 1st September 1993, after which point it became a Grant Maintained school. The school became a Foundation school on 1st September 1999.
2. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The percentage of students speaking English as an additional language is slightly higher than in most schools. There are six students who receive additional language support and there are 36 students for whom English is an additional language. The socio-economic circumstances of the students are generally above average.
3. The school has a number of designated places for students with physical disabilities.
4. The school was last inspected in February 1995.
5. Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests and other nationally recognised tests indicate that students enter the school with broadly average levels of ability although there is a full range of ability in the school. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is well below the national average (122 on the special educational needs register, 7.7 per cent). The percentage of students with statements of special educational need is below the national average (47 at Stages 3-5, which is 2.8 per cent). The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average (78 students which is 6.6 per cent).
6. In 1998, 71 per cent of students stayed on to full time education; 15 per cent gained employment; two per cent entered a training scheme and 12 per cent were in the 'other' category.
7. The standards admission figure is 214 and the school is over-subscribed in all years.
8. The school has set a rolling target average of 63 per cent of students obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C.
9. The school has six aims, these are:
 - To provide the best possible education for all its students whatever their talents or ability.
 - To provide a well-ordered, positive and supportive community where each student can flourish and succeed.
 - To help every student strive for the highest standards in work, conduct and appearance.
 - To encourage and recognise personal achievement and excellence at every level within a spirit of co-operation and service to the wider community.
 - To offer the opportunities which allow students to experience personal growth and development.
 - To ensure that the school plays a full part in helping students prepare themselves for adult life.
1. There were six key issues from the previous report:
 - Comply with the law in respect of religious education and collective worship;

- Establish better monitoring and planning processes to involve governors, senior and middle managers, and to set long-term direction for the school;
- Establish an approach to staff development which balances the needs of individuals, identified through appraisal, and whole-school development needs;
- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 3;
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics through more effective management of the department;
- Improve the effectiveness of the personal and social education and tutorial programmes.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3²

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	117	107	224

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	90	91	81
	Girls	94	84	72
	Total	184	175	153
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	83(79)	79(73)	68(69)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	45(59)	53(50)	34(33)
	National	31(35)	37(36)	28(27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	85	90	82
	Girls	97	86	72
	Total	182	176	154
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	82(65)	78(60)	69(56)
	National	64(62)	64(64)	60(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	54(30)	47(37)	28(30)
	National	31(31)	37(37)	28(31)

Attainment at Key Stage 4³

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	115	109	224

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 students achieving standard specified	Boys	59	113	115
	Girls	65	105	106
	Total	124	218	221
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	56(60)	98(95)	99(99)
	National	46.3(44.6)	90.7(89.8)	95.7(95.2)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved all those they studied:	Number	% Success rate
	School	N/A
	National	N/A

.....

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

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

Attainment in the Sixth Form ⁴

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	86	110	196

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.2	19.1	17.8(16.2)	2.8	2.0	2.6(1.0)
National	N/A	N/A	N/A(17.6)	N/A	N/A	N/A(2.8)

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

	Number	% Success rate
School	N/A	N/A
National		N/A

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

	Number	% Success rate
School	4	100
National		N/A

.....

3

4

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

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	6.5
	Absence	National comparative data	7.7
	Unauthorised	School	0.8
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

3

3 Exclusions

Number of exclusions of students (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	18
	Permanent	2

3 Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	28
	Satisfactory or better	96
	Less than satisfactory	4

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

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

3 **Attainment and progress**

1. By the ages of 14 and 16, in work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. By the age of 19, students' standards of attainment are in line with the level expected. This does not represent a decline in standards in the sixth form but reflects the significant change to the cohort of students in the sixth form compared to that at Key Stages 3 and 4.
2. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, the proportions of students reaching Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. There was no significant difference between boys and girls. The average National Curriculum points score was well above the national average in English, mathematics and science when compared to all schools. In comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds, students' average National Curriculum points score was well above average in English and mathematics and above in science. Whilst results have varied year-to-year, the trend overall is one of improvement.
3. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-C was above the national average. Girls' results were better than boys' but were not significantly different from the national difference. The proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-G was well above the national average. The proportion of students obtaining one or more passes at grades A*-G was well above the national average. The total GCSE points score per student was well above the national average when compared with all schools. When compared with schools with students from similar backgrounds, results were above average. Based on figures for the last five years, the average total GCSE/GNVQ point score per student showed a rising trend, at a faster rate than the national average.
4. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, results at grades A*-C were well above the national average in English, mathematics, art, geography, French, German and religious education; above the national average in science and history; in line with the national average in English literature and business studies; well below in physical education and far below in information technology and music. Results varied widely in design and technology from well above average in food technology and graphical products to far below the national average in systems and control.
5. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, results at grades A*-G were well above the national average in English and mathematics; above in science, art, religious education and business studies; in line with the national average in English literature, geography, history, information technology, music, French, German and physical education. Results varied widely in design and technology from well above average in food technology and graphical products to far below the national average in systems and control.
6. Students' best overall results, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were in art and religious education. The poorest results were in information technology, music and physical education.
7. Results at GCSE have remained consistently above the national average since the previous report. In 1999 there was a slight dip in the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A*-C compared to 1998. The school has generally been successful in achieving its targets for the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A*-C.
8. In the General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-level examinations, the average A/AS points score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A-level or AS equivalent was in line with the national average. Based on the average for the last three years, the average A/AS level point score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalent was below the national average. In 1999, in

GNVQ business intermediate, two candidates achieved distinction and two a pass, which represents an improvement in the quality of grades on 1998.

9. In the 1999 GCE A-level examinations, results were well above the national average in physics, art and sociology; above the national average in communications studies, history, religious education and economics; in line with the national average in English, English literature, biology, chemistry, design and technology, geography, computer studies, information technology, French, German, physical education, business studies and psychology and below in mathematics.
10. In work seen during the inspection in English, students' standards of attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 are well above the levels expected of students of the same age nationally. By the age of 19, students' standards of attainment are in line with course expectations. Students' attainment in speaking and listening is a clear strength. Listening skills are well developed, and from Year 8 upward, students are able to write their own notes competently. By the age of 14, students read novels, plays and poems that are appropriate to their age and prior attainment. By the age of 16, students go on to read more complex texts. By the age of 19, students use their reading skills to study prescribed texts and higher attainers are able to evaluate the literary techniques used in what they have read. By the age of 14, students are familiar with different types of writing, including description, narrative and reportage. Most students have developed the routine of improving their work through re-drafting it. By the age of 16, students consolidate their skills in assembling information carefully and correcting early drafts before presenting their best copy for assessment. By the age of 19, students produce accurate summaries of information on literary and communications topics.
11. Standards of literacy are above the national expectation and students are well able to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. Students have particularly good skills in speaking and listening, which enable them to adapt well to a range of different circumstances. Thus, for example, students in a Year 9 history lesson can take part in role play as part of their exploration of public health issues in the nineteenth century, whilst students studying GCE A-level religious education engage in a finely reasoned philosophical debate. Students demonstrate the capacity to use subject-specific vocabulary in all lessons. Students read fluently and with good expression and understanding. Their range of vocabulary and flexibility in the use of language is sufficient for them to be able to write for a variety of audiences. The standard of punctuation and spelling is generally good.
12. In work seen during the inspection in mathematics, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are well above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students identify and obtain the necessary information when solving problems and they solve quite complex tasks. By the age of 16, standards of attainment are well above the level expected nationally. Students evaluate a number of approaches to tasks in their coursework and are beginning to apply a range of approaches, including techniques at a standard expected at GCE A-level. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line with course expectations. In further mathematics, good work was seen where students solve inequalities.
13. Students have good levels of numeracy skills. They use them effectively in science when handling formulae. In design and technology, they demonstrate a good, wide use of measurement throughout the subject areas. Measurements are accurate and students make rapid progress in Year 7. In geography, graphical skills are sound at Key Stage 3 where they interpret and observe the change in water consumption over a 30 year span and in the sixth form when comparing data of three sites on beach profiles. In business education in the sixth form, students calculate changes in demand relative to price increases and plot graphs of the supply and demand accurately. They interpret the graphs to identify equivalent price and zones of excessive supply and demand.
14. In work seen during the inspection in science, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students learn the skills of planning and carrying out scientific investigations, and are able to discuss maturely what their results indicate. They also develop knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics. By the age of 16, standards of attainment are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students undertake individual investigations as part of their GCSE assessment. They plan these investigations,

make observations, undertake calculations, draw conclusions and evaluate their work. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are above course expectations. High standards of work also occur in sixth-form GCSE courses, and in GCE AS-level lessons where students reflect on the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution on the Christian view of the Creation.

15. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above the level expected in art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages and religious education and at the level expected in information technology, music and physical education.
16. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are well above the level expected in art; above the level expected in geography, history, design and technology, modern languages, physical education and religious education; at the level expected in music and business studies and well below in information technology.
17. In work seen during the inspection and where there is sufficient evidence to form a judgement, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are well above the level expected in art; above the level expected in history, religious education, sociology, economics; at the level expected in design and technology, geography, information technology, French, German, physical education and business studies and below in music.
18. The majority of students make good progress over time at the school. Students make very good progress in lessons. Students make at least good progress in two out of three lessons seen and very good or excellent progress in one lesson in four. Students make good progress at all key stages.
19. At Key Stage 3, there has been a considerable determination to improve students' standards of attainment and the improvement in the quality of teaching is now leading to the very good progress seen in lessons and the good progress over time. Students make very good progress in English, mathematics, science, art, modern languages and religious education; good progress in design and technology, geography, history and music; satisfactory progress in information technology but unsatisfactory progress in physical education. Students' progress in lessons is good in physical education, but progress is unsatisfactory overall, because the boys' curriculum does not meet statutory requirements, and these students make unsatisfactory progress.
20. At Key Stage 4, students make good progress over time. They make very good progress in physical education and examination course religious education and good progress in all other subjects with the exception of information technology where progress is unsatisfactory. Insufficient opportunities are provided for all students to develop their information technology skills throughout the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and teachers do not plan tasks that challenge students, particularly higher attainers.
21. At sixth-form level, students make good progress over time. Nearly 40 per cent of the students in the sixth form start at the school in Year 12 and enter the sixth form with a wide range of prior attainments and experiences. Students make very good progress in English, science, art, modern languages, physical education, examination course religious education and economics; good progress in mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, music, business studies and sociology; satisfactory progress in information technology and leisure and tourism. The majority of students make unsatisfactory progress in religious education because they do not have access to their statutory entitlement.
22. There is no significant difference in the progress made by girls and boys or between students from different ethnic backgrounds. At all key stages, the majority of students with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them and make similar progress to other students in the school.

32. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

23. The high standards of behaviour and response to teaching that were evident at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and improved. Students have very good attitudes to learning and behave well in class. The majority has high aspirations, as shown by the number that continue in full-time education after the age of 16 and seek to go to university. This creates a good environment for teaching and learning, and has a positive effect on levels of attainment. Parents support the view that the school achieves high standards of behaviour.

24. In lessons, students are well motivated and interested in their work. They listen carefully to instructions and sustain their concentration well. They respond positively to challenge and are prepared to persevere with difficult tasks. They are keen to please and enjoy answering teachers' questions. Students are able to work independently and are not over-reliant on their teachers. They have a good capacity for personal study. Students organise their work well and carry out research on their own. They select and use appropriate resources, such as computer databases. Most work hard and take pride in what they do, as is shown by good standards of presentation. Students' interest and application are consistently good across the school. There is little difference according to age group, level of attainment or subject of the curriculum. Sometimes attitudes are unsatisfactory where the teaching is unchallenging and the pace of lessons slow, but these instances are rare.

25. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. Students respect the rules and move around the site in an orderly way. Noisy and boisterous behaviour is uncommon. Students are very trustworthy and have a high degree of respect for property. They handle equipment responsibly and keep the buildings and grounds free of graffiti and litter. The school trusts them to stay in their tutor rooms unsupervised during the lunch hour, and they do not abuse this privilege. Students behave well in lessons. They are polite and quietly spoken, allowing teachers to teach and classes to learn without interruption. The few examples of unsatisfactory behaviour observed in lessons during the inspection occurred where the quality of teaching was less than satisfactory. The rate of exclusion is well below the national average and staff rarely have to resort to formal sanctioning of students.

26. Relationships are very good throughout the school. There is a high degree of harmony between year groups, fostered by the house system that encourages students of all ages to socialise together. Students work well together in lessons and co-operate successfully on group tasks. They wait their turn to answer questions and are willing to share resources. They listen with respect to one another's views and are sensitive to other people's situations and beliefs. Student-teacher relations are based on trust and openness, and students therefore feel free to turn to members of staff for help with work and guidance on personal problems.

27. The quality of personal development is good. Students are confident and willing to accept responsibility for their own learning. They make good use of the library and other facilities. They have a well-developed sense of citizenship and service to the community. The majority of students are actively involved in the life of the school outside lessons. Most take part in some form of extra-curricular activity. Selected older students act as prefects and house captains. These posts carry significant responsibilities, which holders carry out very conscientiously. They regard it as an honour to be chosen for the role. Students also respond well to opportunities to serve the wider community; for example they raise money for charitable causes. Many sixth-form students choose to take up community service placements as their contribution to the sixth-form 'enrichment' curriculum.

37. **Attendance**

28. Attendance is good throughout the school. There is no significant increase in absence as students get older. The rate of attendance exceeds the 90 per cent benchmark in all year groups, including the sixth form. Unauthorised absence is lower than the national average. When a student stays away from school there is in most cases an acceptable reason. The good attendance record of older students promotes high standards of attainment in GCSE examinations.

29. Punctuality is good. Students usually arrive in good time in the morning, allowing a smooth start to the day's activities. This is helped by teachers' insistence on good punctuality. Similarly, students move

purposefully around the site between lessons, so that lateness to lessons during the day is only an occasional concern.

39. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

39. **Teaching**

30. The overall quality of teaching is very good. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and at sixth-form level and it is good at Key Stage 4. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 3 where one-quarter of the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory in the previous report. This improvement in the quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is now leading to very high standards in National Curriculum test results and to consistently high standards at Key Stage 4. Lively, enthusiastic teaching, which motivates students and stimulates learning, is a feature of the majority of lessons.
31. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 68 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 31 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons and is rarely poor. The very good teaching provision at Key Stage 3 is one reason for the very good progress of most students. The quality of teaching is very good in English, mathematics, science, art, modern foreign languages and religious education; good in design and technology, geography, history, music, physical education and satisfactory in information technology.
32. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 65 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 20 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in seven per cent of lessons and is rarely poor. The quality of teaching is very good in physical education, examination course for religious education and business studies; good in all other subjects with the exception of information technology where it is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching in the Key Stage 4 general studies course is usually good but is not consistent across all classes. In some, expectations are lower and learning outcomes for lessons are not defined closely enough. The unsatisfactory teaching in information technology is because planning is poor, schemes of work are poor and one teacher does not use a scheme. This is having an adverse impact on standards, particularly for those students studying for GCSE.
33. At sixth-form level, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 75 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 31 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in two per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is very good in English, science, art, modern foreign languages, physical education, examination course for religious education and GCE A-level economics; good in mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, music, business studies, sociology and GNVQ courses and satisfactory in information technology.
34. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. This is particularly true at Key Stage 3 where teachers use their knowledge of the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests system to improve the performance of students. For example, in mathematics, they explain tasks clearly and use mathematical terms appropriately. In a Year 7 class in information technology, the teacher used their knowledge of the software application to good effect to help and support students when problems occurred. Most non-specialist teachers and temporary teachers have a secure knowledge for the classes that they are teaching.
35. Teachers' expectations are very high. Nearly all teachers have very high expectations of students' behaviour that account for the very good working atmosphere in most classes. Appropriate and challenging work is set in English and leads to standards being well above the level expected. Often students respond positively to the impact of very good teaching by producing their best efforts as was seen in a Year 10 lesson in physical education. In Key Stage 4 general studies, some expectations are lower and learning outcomes for lessons are not defined closely enough.

36. The quality of planning is very good. In art, all lessons benefit from very clear planning which identifies the key learning objectives. In most cases these are shared and discussed with students and linked to previous learning. This leads to students making very good progress at sixth-form level and to well above average examination results. When planning is poor, as in information technology, students' progress is adversely affected and examination results at GCSE are far below the national average.
37. Most teachers use a good range of teaching strategies and provide activities that help to sustain most students' concentration and interest. Teachers provide a high level of support and effective demonstrations to help students succeed and build self-esteem. In a Year 9 modern foreign language class, the teacher planned a variety of successful strategies to teach and consolidate vocabulary and structures. There were frequent opportunities for students to speak in the language either in response to the teacher's questions or in paired oral practice.
38. Classroom management is a strength of many teachers. It is based on very good relationships and mutual respect between teachers and students. Teachers use praise and encouragement to move students forward in their studies. In physical education, a notable strength in teaching is the excellent standard of discipline, which is maintained in lessons and extra-curricular activities. In these lessons, relationships between the teachers and students are very good, and this supportive environment contributes significantly to the high standards of dress, participation and behaviour in the department. However, in a Year 11 information technology class, the teacher allowed students to continue to talk and did not gain the attention of the students; this led to unsatisfactory progress being made by most students.
39. The use of time is very good. Many lessons are taught at a brisk pace with clearly focused tasks that help to sustain students' concentration and very good behaviour. In most science lessons, teachers allow time at the end for a summary of the work covered, and to discuss what has been learnt; this is helping students to learn their work thoroughly.
40. Teachers make satisfactory use of the available resources. Teachers do not always plan to use information technology because of problems gaining access to facilities at the appropriate time in the programme of study. In religious education, students' experiences are enriched by visits to places of worship and there is a good stock of books and artefacts that are used to encourage students to investigate topics assimilating knowledge and developing understanding.
41. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment is good. The marking of students' work in exercise books and folders is variable across the departments, however, many good examples of constructive comments to encourage students to improve were seen. In a Year 9 mathematics class, there was good use of questioning to assess students' knowledge and understanding with the teacher using challenging questions related to estimation and analysis to promote good understanding.
42. The setting and use of homework is good. Many opportunities are provided for sixth form students to extend their studies through homework and independent study. Teachers set homework on a regular basis and it is normally relevant to the topic being covered. In Year 9 design and technology class, homework was used very effectively to prepare for practical tasks and to develop designs.
43. The quality of teaching for students with special educational needs who are withdrawn from mainstream classes is good and well structured to meet individual needs. Teachers and support assistants give effective help to individuals and small groups of students in mainstream classes particularly in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3. The good quality of the teaching and support for these students impacts positively on their attainment and progress.

53. **The curriculum and assessment**

44. The curriculum provides good breadth, balance and relevance at Key Stages 3 and 4. A large number of GCE A/AS-level courses are offered for sixth-form students. The curriculum is enhanced through drama and the excellent extra-curriculum provision. Statutory curriculum requirements are met except for the provision of dance for boys in physical education at Key Stage 3, religious education for all students in the sixth form and information technology at Key Stage 4. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum including religious education and personal and social education. The proportion of time allocated to subjects is appropriate. The length of the taught week is in line with DfEE recommendations.
45. A well-planned programme of personal and social education promotes the personal development of students throughout the school and prepares them for adult life. The programme includes health education, sex education, bullying and issues of drug misuse, which are comprehensively covered. The scheme builds progressively throughout a student's school life. Although the personal and social education programme lacks specific sections addressing citizenship, it does include visits by representatives of various statutory and voluntary organisations. Since the last report, the school has designed and implemented a better programme of personal and social education with stronger links with the pastoral system.
46. Students are provided with good equality of access and opportunity although only those students who take the GCE A-level religious education receive religious education; the majority of students in the sixth form make no progress in religious education because there is no provision for them to study it.
47. Students with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum and they are well integrated within the school. Provision for them is good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In these subjects the curriculum is appropriately adapted and modified to take account of their wide range of learning needs, it is particularly well developed in science at Key Stage 3. In other subjects, the curriculum is not always so well structured and the school has not given sufficient thought about how to use information technology to support students with special educational needs.
48. Planning for progression and continuity is good. The curriculum is planned to create a smooth transition between key stages and there are also links with primary schools to help promote both the school and to ensure continuity and progression in students' education. However, continuity and progression are affected by timetabling arrangements in some subjects, which leads to classes being shared between teachers and unsatisfactory distribution of time to subjects throughout the two-week cycle.
49. The school's arrangements for careers education and guidance are good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good at sixth-form level.
50. The breadth and variety of the school's extra curricular activities are excellent, a particular strength being the provision for sport. The school enjoys success in competitive sport through some 600 fixtures per year. About 75 per cent of students take part in some sporting activity, supported by 15 members of staff.
51. The procedures for assessing students' attainment in Key Stage 3 are good. All subjects carry out regular assessments and, at the end of the key stage, provide the required teacher assessments of students' attainment in relation to the National Curriculum. Departments regularly assess the National Curriculum levels which students achieve throughout the key stage and use this data effectively to ascertain a student's attainment compared with national standards. This good practice is not yet fully consistent across departments, for example, in music, the level of students' prior attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, is not assessed or related to levels expected nationally for students of the same age. In physical education, a new system of assessment in Key Stage 3 has been introduced but it is still too early for the results to be assessed effectively.
52. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the procedures for assessing students' attainment are good. All

subjects make regular assessments. Students are well informed about their potential attainment in relation to GCSE and GCE A-level standards and they are aware of their predicted final grades. All departments, with the exception of physical education, then use this information to set targets to make students aware of the standards they are achieving, and to encourage them to make further efforts and increase their rate of progress. There are particularly thorough assessment systems being used within the GNVQ courses in the sixth form.

53. The school makes good use of its assessment information throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In Key Stage 3, starting with students' attainment on entry, the school has available a comprehensive set of data and information which it uses effectively to set realistic targets for the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The effective use of this information is of particular benefit in raising teachers' expectations of what the students can do. The school operates a system of academic monitoring in Years 7 and 8, where subject teachers set targets for their students and the progress towards these targets is monitored by form tutors, thereby making an effective link between the academic and pastoral strands of the school. Throughout Key Stage 4, all the available assessment information is collated to give a clear indication of each student's progress within and across subjects and can be used to identify under-achievement. This rigour is then continued in to the sixth form.
54. The procedures for the identification, assessment and review of students with special educational needs are good and fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice.
55. The use of assessment to address curriculum planning within both Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form is good. The school has available a very wide range of data collated from many sources and has created systems which it uses at whole-school level in a wide range of ways to predict and track attainment and set whole-school targets. Within individual subjects, there are several examples of departments adjusting their curriculum planning as a result of assessment findings. For example, in mathematics, the curriculum is reviewed each year and is adapted, particularly in Key Stage 3, where the level of prior attainment on entry in Year 7 is taken into account in the annual curriculum review. Also, in science, the result of the mock National Curriculum tests resulted in a review, and reinforcement of the work covered in Years 7 and 8. Within the sixth form, the improved grades at A-level physics and chemistry are as a result of a change in syllabus following the use of assessment information to review the curriculum.
56. Reports are issued annually, and include for all subjects, an indication of level in relation to the National Curriculum; however, these reports generally do not contain sufficient detail with regard to a student's achievement and progress in each subject. At Key Stage 4, there is a statutory breach in that religious education is not included specifically within the reports to parents.
57. The last inspection report noted that there was some good practice in assessment but it was generally under-developed across the school. The school has made good progress in this area. Practice is now much better and consistent across most departments. Most departments now make effective use of data, including previous National Curriculum test results. The school has now in place an effective assessment policy.
67. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**
58. The school makes good overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development addressing this area of its work in many different ways. The provision is not sufficiently co-ordinated and subjects do not always plan specifically how they can contribute through topics already being taught.
59. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The quality of assemblies observed during the inspection was good. Although students do not attend a daily act of collective worship, some assemblies are designed to stimulate and give opportunity for thought, reflection and prayer. Others present suitable themes but do not fully use the opportunities to stimulate students' thought. There is student participation throughout the school and assemblies use music, poetry and drama. Religious education makes a major contribution through introducing students to the beliefs, practices and

lifestyles of believers and by challenging them to consider their own value and purpose in life. There is an enthusiastic Christian Union group in which students' spiritual development is sensitively encouraged. Some aspects of science and mathematics draw students' attention to awe and wonder and in art, drama and history, students learn how people's beliefs are affected through imagery, relationships and changes in society. A weakness in the provision is the lack of any regular planned opportunity for the majority of sixth-form students to study religious education and moral issues.

60. The provision for moral development is very good. The school's expectations of right and wrong are stated clearly in the home-school contract and in a code of conduct. Its orderly day-to-day life in which students are seen to be trusted and staff are consistent in their expectations, leaves students in no doubt of the behavioural standards expected. Praise and commendation feature much more strongly than sanctions. In their early years, students receive their personal and social education from the house staff which enables teachers whom they know well to lay down solid foundations of conduct. This work is reinforced through assemblies and by form teachers. As part of the programmes of study, English, geography, history, science and religious education challenge students to consider issues of morality and personal relationships. In physical education, there is a strong emphasis on fair play and in other practical subjects, on safe and considerate working habits. At sixth-form level, students in religious education consider morality from a philosophical viewpoint and business studies students learn about business ethics and the importance of law in society.
61. There is also very good provision for students' social development. Students are members of one of six houses and it is in these that they gain experience in working, competing and playing together. They offer residential opportunities and are the basis for much collaborative work to raise money for charity. These are complemented as students reach the sixth form by an equally cohesive and supportive organisation. Students who have entered the school at this level are very positive about their experience and welcome and value the support and guidance provided through their personal development programme. Within the curriculum, most subjects give opportunities for students to work in groups. Outside the classroom, there is a wide variety of sports teams, clubs and societies which foster co-operation and team work. During the last school year, there were at least 15 school productions in drama and music offering further experience of working together. There are opportunities for students to take responsibility for sections of their own work through independent research in most curriculum subjects. Within the house system, students from Year 7 onwards can assume the responsibilities of form and games captains. More senior students play leading roles at house and school level. Year 11 students play a leading role in the production of the annual year book. Sixth-form students act as prefects and assist in the library and homework clubs as well as organising their own social and charity raising through committees. The school's clubs and societies and schemes, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, give students opportunities to opt into activities and to develop their personal sufficiency and initiative. Although the personal and social education programme lacks specific sections addressing citizenship, it does include visits by representatives of various statutory and voluntary organisations. In addition to participation in a local play scheme and a well-organised sixth-form community service scheme, students raise money for charities both in this country and as far away as Nepal and Zimbabwe. Physical education offers older students the opportunity to train for the Community Sports Leader Award. Business studies students study the effect of planning decisions on communities and there is a new science course in the sixth form entitled 'Science for Public Understanding'.
62. The provision made for students' cultural development is satisfactory. The ambitious programme of school productions covers a wide spectrum and there are musical and artistic events organised within school. Exhibitions of art and sculpture are on display and local artistic events, such as the Cheltenham Festival, are publicised. There is, however, an apparent absence of high quality cultural inputs from outside the school. Students gain a sound knowledge and appreciation of the cultures associated with religious faiths through religious education. There are links with the local Hindu community and opportunities for some students to visit faith communities in nearby cities. There are many opportunities within geography, history and modern foreign languages to study other cultures and to visit Europe and more distant venues such as Nepal. In addition to other instrumental and choral groups, the school has recently formed two steel bands. At sixth-form level, plans are well advanced to participate in a project linking schools in a number of European countries.

63. Since the last report, the school has designed and implemented a better programme of personal and social education with stronger links with the pastoral system. More work is needed on its management and evaluation to ensure that it meets the high standards found in other parts of the curriculum. There is still little opportunity in the sixth form for students' spiritual development other than through their assemblies. The school has made satisfactory progress in this area of its work since the last report.
73. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**
64. The last inspection report praised the quality of welfare and guidance. The school has successfully maintained high standards. It gives very good pastoral care to all its students, which they and their parents value.
65. The school's house system is an effective way of providing support and guidance to the large number of students in Years 7 to 11. It is very successful in providing continuity of care. Students stay in the same house and tutor group throughout their time in school. House heads have sufficient non-teaching time in which to carry out their role and oversee the work of form tutors. As individuals, they are highly experienced in pastoral care. They know students and their families well and are able to give them appropriate support and guidance. Students find their house heads approachable, and are therefore willing to turn to them for help. However, the school provides good alternative sources of advice for the minority who would prefer to talk to someone else. They can for example, seek guidance from the school nurse or the senior management team. There are strong and effective links between the pastoral and academic areas of school life. Formal referral systems ensure that form tutors and house heads are informed of any concerns which subject teachers have about students' academic work or behaviour in lessons.
66. The pastoral system copes effectively with issues that are specific to particular age groups, such as the transfer from primary to secondary education. Students receive good advice on a wide range of issues such as induction, GCSE options and careers via the school's programme of personal and social education. The school has significantly improved its provision in this area since the last inspection. House assemblies also play a part in pastoral care. They successfully foster a sense of community and shared identity that helps new students to settle into the school. Year 7 like the house system and feel that it gives them good support and security.
67. The school makes very good provision for support and guidance in the sixth form. The house structure is impractical at this stage because of the large numbers of students who join the sixth form from other schools. It is therefore replaced by a system of heads of year and form tutors. This is effective in providing students with help and guidance appropriate to this stage of education. They receive very good advice on study skills and applications to university and colleges.
68. There are good arrangements for monitoring the progress of students in the main school and students in the sixth form. Personal development is monitored effectively through the pastoral system and teachers' good knowledge of students as individuals. All subject departments monitor academic attainment carefully and most monitor behaviour and attendance. Form tutors monitor students in Years 7 and 8 and discuss their progress against targets in individual interviews. Students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from a comprehensive mentoring scheme which gives them very good support and raises standards of attainment.
69. The school's arrangements to promote good behaviour are very effective. The code of conduct and the school rules clearly tell students what is expected of them. The system of sanctions and rewards provides an appropriate range of incentives and deterrents, and students say that members of staff apply it fairly. During the inspection, teachers were rarely seen to need sanctions to control students' behaviour. The school has a good formal policy to combat bullying and actual incidents are handled well.
70. Attendance procedures are excellent and successfully encourage good attendance in all year groups. Form tutors hold roll calls and complete registers in accordance with legal requirements, and there are thorough arrangements for monitoring and following up unexplained absences. Teachers also call a

register at the beginning of individual lessons as a safeguard against internal truancy. The school's excellent provision extends to the sixth form. Students in Years 12 and 13 are required to register at the beginning of school sessions, and their attendance records are carefully monitored.

71. There is good provision for child protection. The school has two designated members of staff who have had training in child protection issues, and has established good links with the relevant outside agencies. New members of staff are briefed on child protection procedures as part of their induction to the school.
72. The school has put in place effective measures to promote the health and safety of its students. It meets statutory requirements regarding checks of equipment, and carries out regular fire drills. There is good provision for first aid and for risk assessments. All high-risk areas and activities have been properly assessed, with the exception of physical education.
73. The school provides good pastoral support for students with special educational needs. External specialists give effective help for students with statements of special educational need.
83. **Partnership with parents and the community**
74. The school has developed a very good partnership with parents and the community. Parents are happy with home/school links and feel that they are encouraged to play an active part in their children's learning. The school's partnership with the outside world makes a positive contribution to its curriculum and standards of pastoral care.
75. Parents receive good information about the school and their children's learning. The school sends out regular newsletters and produces booklets that explain and give advice on a wide range of matters, for example homework and courses in Key Stage 4. The school prospectus is informative, attractively presented and meets legal requirements. There is also a very good, separate sixth-form prospectus. The governors' annual report to parents contains all the information required. Homework diaries provide an adequate on-going line of communication between home and school. They are filled in properly by students and are checked regularly by form tutors.
76. The school provides good opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress with teachers. There are satisfactory arrangements for formal consultation evenings, and parents are able to see members of staff at other times by appointment. The school's system of written reporting has some weaknesses. This is reflected in the views of a minority of parents who express concerns about the content of the annual reports on students' progress. The inspection evidence supports their criticisms. The school's procedures do not cover all subjects of the school's curriculum and therefore fail to comply with the statutory requirements on reporting to parents. There are no written reports on students' progress in religious education at Key Stage 4 and personal and social education. The quality of reporting also varies between subjects. Some departments make bland comments which do not tell parents clearly and unambiguously what their children have learnt and can do. They also describe targets for improvement in very general terms, which limits their usefulness to students and parents.
77. The procedures for the identification, assessment and review of students with special educational needs are good and fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. The school makes every effort to encourage parents to attend the reviews of students with individual education plans.
78. Parents give very valuable support to the school that enhances their children's progress and raises standards of attainment. There is a high level of parental approval for the attitudes and values that the school promotes. Parents are interested in students' learning and want their children to achieve high standards. They read and sign homework diaries, and many contact the school to talk to teachers about attainment and progress. Attendance at consultation evenings is very high, and parents also attend school plays and concerts in large numbers. They provide extra resources for learning through their financial contributions towards the cost of school trips and through the purchase of items such as GCSE revision guides. There is an active parents' association which successfully raises funds for the school and organises social events for students and parents.

79. The school has very good links with other schools, colleges and agencies. For example, the education welfare officer works closely with members of staff to improve students' attendance. The school copes well with the problems of taking in many sixth-form students from other secondary schools, and receiving Year 7 students from more than 20 feeder schools. There is very good liaison with primary schools over the induction of new students and the transfer of records. Learning support staff co-operate closely with one another, and the strong links in this area enhance provision for students with special educational needs. The school also liaises effectively with local secondary schools over the intake of new sixth-form students.
80. There is a strong partnership between the school and the general community. For example, it runs the community sports centre which is very well used by local residents. The school's links with a wide range of local organisations make a substantial contribution to students' academic, social and personal education. Contacts with local business and industry are well developed at whole-school level. They are particularly valuable in the field of careers education and guidance, where they enhance the quality of work experience placements and Year 12's 'Industry Week'. The school also provides good opportunities for students to serve the community. It is involved in a summer play scheme with a local special school, and there is a well established programme of community service in the sixth form, with over one hundred placements.
90. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**
90. **Leadership and management**
81. The quality of leadership in the school is very good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is fully committed to raising standards in the school. He has established a very clear direction for the work of the school. There is a determination to ensure that students who attend the school achieve their maximum potential.
82. The headteacher is very well supported by other members of the senior management team whose individual skills complement those of their colleagues. The line management system operates well and enables strengths to be recognised and areas for development and improvement to be identified.
83. The quality of leadership at middle management level is good. Most middle managers have established a clear direction for their subject and monitor the work of the subject effectively. For example, in mathematics, the new head of department has established a good team that work well together with a strong emphasis on improving standards of attainment and this is reflected in National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3. However, the management of information technology is unsatisfactory. This has led to GCSE results that are far below the national average and students making unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 4.
84. The governing body has a very good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school well. The governing body takes an active role in monitoring the work of the school. There is a planned programme of subject reviews and governors work with the senior management team in identifying areas for development, setting targets and monitoring the progress made towards these targets. It is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses within subjects.
85. The ethos of the school is excellent. Parents are very supportive of the school and are pleased with the values that the school promotes. The school raises the self-esteem of its students through its very good links with the wider community and through its strong pastoral system. The school also strives to attain high standards and is successful in achieving this. The school is very successful in meeting its aims and implementing its policies.
86. The monitoring and support of teaching is good. There is a programme of subject reviews that includes formal observation of all teachers of the subject. Examination results are discussed and action plans drawn up to support subjects. The results of this approach are clear in the improvement in teaching and the average GCSE points score that is rising at a faster rate than the national average. The monitoring of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Statutory breaches in National Curriculum Programmes

of Study in information technology and physical education have been recognised but as yet have not been acted upon.

87. Development planning, at a whole school level and at department level is good, with carefully identified priorities appropriate to the needs of the school. Priorities are clearly linked to raising standards and improving the educational experiences of the students. Plans identify time scales and responsibilities for developments but do not always indicate the cost to the school.
88. The governing body, however, fails to meet some of its statutory requirements. There is insufficient provision for religious education in the sixth form. Statutory requirements are not being met fully in information technology at Key Stage 4 and in physical education at Key Stage 3. The school does not comply fully with statutory requirements regarding an act of collective worship.
89. The school has made good progress since the previous report. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and high standards of attainment have been maintained. Under the leadership of the headteacher, the senior management team and the governing body, most of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have been overcome.
90. Given the improvements made, the quality of leadership provided by the headteacher, the governing body and the senior management team, the school is very well placed to continue its improvement.
100. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**
91. The match of number, qualifications and experience of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good. Staff are appropriately qualified for the subjects they are teaching except in general studies at Key Stage 4 where the depth of students' learning is adversely affected by their having non-specialist teachers who do not have a wide experience of teaching the subject.
92. The match between the needs of the curriculum and the number of support staff is satisfactory. Support staff working with special educational needs students are well qualified and experienced.
93. There are satisfactory arrangements for the professional development of staff. In-service training is linked to the school development plan and to departmental requirements. Procedures for appraisal of staff are in place but not yet fully implemented. There are good arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers who receive effective support from the school, the local education authority and from their subject departments. Experienced teachers who are new to the school are able to avail themselves of all or part of the school induction process if they wish.
94. The school has satisfactory accommodation to meet the needs of the curriculum. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection, including new provision for information technology and business studies and soon to be completed drama, sports and physical education facilities. In addition, access to toilet facilities was raised as an issue in the last report and there are plans for a new disabled toilet facility and a lift to improve access to the upper floors for those with mobility difficulties. There are some difficulties in curriculum areas such as mathematics, music practise rooms and religious education where there are too few classrooms and specialist facilities. The current arrangements for these subjects restrict teaching and learning activities and, in the case of the GCSE physical education groups and mathematics, mean that some students and teachers have no permanent base for their lessons.
95. The condition and appearance of accommodation is good. The site and buildings are well maintained. Staff and students take a pride in their surroundings and the attractive displays seen in many areas of the school. A rolling programme of routine repair and decoration ensures that the high standard of appearance is maintained. Many parts of the school are open during breaks and lunchtime and accessible to students for private study or relaxation. The access enjoyed by students and the respect they have for their environment is reflected in the very low incidence of misuse and willful damage.
96. Since the last inspection, the school has been successful in obtaining money from a variety of sources

to improve the provision for students with physical disabilities. However, there are access problems, particularly when moving wheelchair students from ground to upper floors and there are insufficient ramps around the school; for example, more ramps to the quadrangle would assist wheelchair bound students to move quickly to other parts of the building and avoid narrow congested corridors and heavy doors. The school is aware there are training requirements for staff with regard to lifting older students.

97. Progress on accommodation issues since the last report has been good with some issues fully addressed and others in-hand. Management of the site and buildings is efficient. The governors' finance and general purposes committee is taking a lead on risk assessment and health and safety issues where they relate to accommodation, reflecting the importance placed on this significant resource.
98. Despite a reduction in departmental funding in the current school year, the level of educational resources is satisfactory, although there are variations between departments. The quality and quantity of resources in religious education, careers education and physical education are good.
99. The library is a very useful resource. It has a large stock of books, although there is a limited range of modern and teenage fiction. The library can seat a large number of students and is staffed by a full-time librarian. The level of resources to develop multicultural understanding is satisfactory. There is an additional sixth-form library that is used extensively.
100. There is a suite of computers in the main library, and students have access to the Internet. However, the number of computers throughout the school, whilst they are of good quality, is far below the national average, and this has a direct impact on the availability of information technology resources for departments in their everyday teaching. The lack of information technology resources for use across the curriculum is one reason for students' unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 and the school not meeting National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 4. The ratio of computers to students has deteriorated since the last inspection.
101. The school makes satisfactory use of resources beyond the school by organising visits relevant to aspects of the curriculum such as field trips in geography and visiting speakers, for example from the blood transfusion service.
111. **The efficiency of the school**
102. Financial planning in the school is very good. The school manages its budget effectively and has very good procedures in place to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness. The current school strategic planning is good and covers both short- and long-term development planning related to available and projected finances. These documents provide a suitable basis to identify many of the priorities for the long-term future of the school. The governing body plays a full and active role in the financial planning and management of the school and there is a good working partnership between the governors and the staff.
103. The school carries out forecasts of the potential number of students on roll and produces financial forecasts and budget assumptions based upon these forecasts. The school took account of the predicted decline in the number of sixth-form students. Departments are allocated money on a combination of a bid and formula basis with additional funding available for curriculum developments.
104. The school is an efficient organisation except in the management of teaching staff, where anomalies in this year's timetable have created split classes and teachers teaching outside their specialism. Satisfactory use is made of learning support staff. The use of accommodation and available resources is very good.
105. Routine administration of the school's budget is excellent. There are very efficient computer based systems in place to allow monitoring of the school's expenditure against budget, and extremely well-defined procedures for obtaining quotations and tenders before placing orders. The recommendations of the Auditor's report have all been agreed and implemented. The quality of the school administration

and routine administration is very good and ensures that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

106. Funding provided for special educational needs is used effectively. The school has received capital grants for a number of projects such as the funding of a new business and information technology block and is in the process of up-grading much of the community sports facilities. The school has accumulated substantial reserves which are earmarked for improvements to the sports facilities. The sale of surplus land by the school improved by the DfEE has allowed the school to make significant improvements to the sports facilities and for provision for the performing arts.
107. The socio-economic circumstances of the overall student population are above the national average, and their attainment on entry is at the level expected of students of the same age nationally. By the age of 14, overall attainment is above the level expected nationally in most subjects and well above in English and mathematics. By the age of 16, attainment is above the level expected. At the time of the last inspection report, the school gave good value for money. Given that most students respond very well to the education provided and make at least good progress in most subjects, the school now provides very good value for money.

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

117.

117. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

117. **English**

108. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportions of students at the age of 14 attaining Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were well above the national averages. Results in recent years have been variable. In 1997 the proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above dipped from the 1996 level but recovered in 1998 and 1999. The average National Curriculum points score attained by students in 1999 was well above the national average when compared with all schools and for schools with students from similar backgrounds. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Results in 1999 were similar to those gained in mathematics and slightly better than those obtained in science.
109. In 1999, the proportions of students attaining both GCSE grades A*-C and grades A*-G in English was well above the national average. In English literature, the proportions attaining both grades A*-C and grades A*-G were in line with the national average. Results in English have improved steadily over the past three years. Results in English literature in 1999 were lower than they were in the previous two years, when they were well above the national average. Students' results in English were not significantly different from those they obtained in most other subjects in the school.
110. Results attained in 1999 at GCE A-level in both English and English literature were in line with expectations for the course nationally and results in communications studies were above the national expectation. Results over the past three years in the three subjects have been variable and have reflected differing levels of prior attainment in the cohorts of students choosing to study the subject.
111. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirms that the examination results above accurately reflect the current standard of attainment in the school except for GCSE English literature, which is judged to be well above the national average. The proportion of students attaining grades A*-C in 1999 was considerably lower than in previous years and so appears to be an anomaly.
112. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 are well above the levels expected of students of the same age nationally. By the age of 19, students' standards of attainment are in line with course expectations.
113. Students' attainment in speaking and listening is a clear strength. By the age of 14, students confidently take part in whole-class, group and paired discussions, expressing themselves fully and holding the interest of their listeners by using a varied vocabulary. In drama lessons, students develop their powers of non-verbal communication such as mime and facial expression. By the age of 16, students express themselves with increasing clarity and cogency, and are able to draw upon evidence to support their case. This was seen, for example, in a Year 11 class on 'An Inspector Calls', when students were able to explain the rhetorical devices used in particular speeches. By the age of 19, higher attaining students interact well with each other and their teachers to examine ideas closely, as was seen in a Year 13 lesson on communications studies in which the effect of the increasing use of technology in communications was debated with skill and gusto. Lower attaining students tend to be somewhat reluctant to participate in class discussion and possess a limited technical vocabulary. Listening skills are well developed, and from Year 8 upward, students are able to write their own notes competently.
114. By the age of 14, students read novels, plays and poems that are appropriate to their age and prior attainment. They read aloud with clear voices and usually with very good expression. Students recognise when writing is for a given audience, and can, for example, explain in depth the differences in style and content between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. Many students have favourite authors.

By the age of 16, students go on to read more complex texts. They do so in some depth and can explain, for example, how character can be created through fine detail. The understanding of lower attaining students, who are in a minority, is often limited to the literal meaning. By the age of 19, students use their reading skills to study prescribed texts and higher attainers are able to evaluate the literary techniques used in what they have read. Students also undertake their own research and good examples of this were seen on communications topics. However, few students develop the range of their reading to the extent that might be expected.

115. By the age of 14, students are familiar with different types of writing, including description, narrative and reportage. Most students have developed the routine of improving their work through re-drafting it. By the age of 16, students consolidate their skills in assembling information carefully and correcting early drafts before presenting their best copy for assessment. They also extend the scope of their writing. For example, some particularly good extended writing was seen in which the different techniques used by authors in creating 'twist' endings were explored and illustrated most successfully. By the age of 19, students produce accurate summaries of information on literary and communications topics and many write fully on the themes and development of character in literature they have studied. However, only the higher attainers produce work that includes close linguistic analysis. Students do not use information technology sufficiently in their work to meet the expectations of the National Curriculum.
116. Students make very good progress at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and good progress at Key Stage 4. Early in Key Stage 3, students learn how to redraft their work and this leads to them becoming more self-critical. They are helped to develop this routine by the careful manner in which teachers mark first drafts and the helpful quality of advice they offer students. The schemes of work which are in place, and are followed by teachers, ensure that students comprehensively and systematically learn all the skills necessary to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. In Key Stage 4 and post-16, students go on to consolidate their skills, a process which is helped by an increased emphasis upon self-assessment. Whilst most sixth-form students are conscientious, the extent to which they develop higher level writing skills when discussing literature, or develop their taste in reading, is less than might be expected. Good relationships between students and teachers help to create an atmosphere in which learning takes place. Students with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as other students. However, a small proportion of such students makes progress at a slower rate than other students when English is taught by two teachers and their work lacks continuity.
117. Students' attitudes are very good. In lessons which focus upon speaking and listening they form particularly positive relationships, being willing to share experiences and to challenge each other's ideas. Students are respectful to each other and to their teachers. They treat books carefully. Whilst the majority of students learn how to organise their work, some sixth-form students display limited initiative in furthering their own studies through independent reading.
118. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and it is good at Key Stage 4. When teaching is good or very good, lessons are planned very carefully. Reference is made to the department's schemes of work, which sets out the rate at which students should develop their skills. The prior attainment of students is taken into account so that the work in each lesson enables students to make good progress. Teachers display very good subject knowledge. The tasks are suitably varied and the momentum of the lessons is maintained. Expectations are high and discipline is generally very good. Relationships with students are positive. When teaching is less effective or unsatisfactory, planning does not adequately take into account the prior attainment of the students, resulting in lack of challenge for higher attainers or lack of sufficient guidance for lower attainers, and there is insufficient variety in the tasks set to maintain the momentum of the lesson. Marking is mostly of very good quality.
119. Standards of literacy are above the national expectation and students are well able to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. Students have particularly good skills in speaking and listening, which enable them to adapt well to a range of different circumstances. Thus, for example, students in a Year 9 history lesson can take part in role-play as part of their exploration of public health issues in the nineteenth century, whilst students studying GCE A-level religious education engage in a finely

reasoned philosophical debate. Students demonstrate the capacity to use subject-specific vocabulary in all lessons. Students read fluently and with good expression and understanding. Their range of vocabulary and flexibility in the use of language is sufficient for them to be able to write for a variety of audiences. The standard of punctuation and spelling is generally good.

120. The quality of leadership in the subject is very good and contributes to the high standards that are achieved. However, further consideration might be given to ensuring that all students receive entitlement to drama and to the use of information technology.
121. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Students' standards of attainment and the quality of teaching have both improved.
131. **Mathematics**
122. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportions of students at the age of 14 attaining Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were well above the national averages. The trend in results in the past has broadly mirrored the national trend. The average National Curriculum points score attained by students in 1999 was well above the national average when compared with all schools and for schools with students from similar backgrounds. The difference in attainment between boys and girls follows the national trend. Results in mathematics are similar to those in English and slightly better than those in science.
123. The proportion of students achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was well above the national average and the proportion of students achieving grades A*-G was also well above the national average. There was no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys. Students' results in mathematics were not significantly different from those they obtained in most other subjects in the school.
124. The proportion of students gaining a grade A-E at GCE A-level was above the national average. The average points score per student was below the national average, this was lower than in the previous year, but similar to those in 1997. Results were appropriate for the students concerned.
125. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are well above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students identify and obtain the necessary information when solving problems and they solve quite complex tasks. They introduce questions of their own. Higher attainers apply their understanding of symmetry, angles, bisectors of both angles and lines and diagonals to classify quadrilaterals. They use Pythagoras' theorem accurately when solving problems in two-dimension. Middle attainers develop very good techniques in writing up statistical experiments. They analyse the data very well and make relevant observations. The low attainers understand that probability ranges from 0 to 1 and find the probability of events with equally likely outcomes.
126. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are well above the level expected nationally. Students evaluate a number of approaches to tasks in their coursework and are beginning to apply a range of approaches, including techniques, at a standard expected at A-level, for example, calculations of combinations and permutations. The middle attainers substitute numerical values into quadratic functions accurately and plot the curves of the functions. They recognise the characteristics of the graphs of the functions, for example the line symmetry, intersection with the axes and the maximum or minimum point. Low attainers collect like terms and solve simple linear equations. Students calculate angles in cyclic quadrilaterals and in solving problems, apply the rules well. In data handling, they understand that data can be prejudiced and that problems need to be precise. From this, they reason that different methods of data collection may influence results. They calculate the standard deviation of a distribution and correctly interpret frequency diagrams.
127. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line with

course expectations. Students' standards are higher than examination results would suggest because the present cohort of students had higher GCSE grades when entering the sixth form than did their counterparts who had undertaken the course previously. In further mathematics, good work was seen where students solve inequalities. They understand the need to identify critical values and have good graph sketching skills. They have good recall of techniques to calculate the modulus and argument of complex numbers. In pure mathematics, students understand and use the appropriate rules of differentiation. They solve exponential equations. Students sketch graphs of equations in parametric form. They can transform these equations into a Cartesian equation. In mechanics, students confidently calculate acceleration as a function of time. Differentiation and integration skills are soundly applied. In statistics, students analyse scatter diagrams and apply the product-momentum correlation coefficient. They use it to analyse correlation effectively.

128. Progress is very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. It is good in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students. In the sixth form, the school recognised that students were under-achieving and highlighted the need for improvements at GCE A-level. The teaching strategies have improved and this has had a positive effect on progress, which is not yet reflected in the examination results. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, there are examples of very good progress in lessons. The very good progress can be attributed to the high level of expectations that stimulate students to think mathematically. Teachers use teaching strategies and methodology that achieve a good balance between explaining, discussing and practising new mathematics. This fosters a thorough understanding of the mathematics. The attitudes to work of students are very good and they work hard in lessons. Progress is good where the pace of the lesson is brisk and a variety of teaching strategies is used. Teachers use questioning effectively to assess students' understanding, consolidate previous learning and allow them to progress on to new mathematics. Teachers' effective support, guidance and challenging use of questions promote this progress. In the sixth-form lessons, there were examples of very good progress where students quickly progressed from using tree diagrams to calculate combined probabilities to recognising the binomial distribution in calculating the probabilities theoretically.
129. Students' attitudes are very good. Students generally concentrate well in lessons and they listen attentively to their teachers. Students maintain interest and concentration and the majority stay on task throughout the lesson. They respond well to questions and give clear answers. Behaviour is very good and students take good care of equipment and books. They handle equipment sensibly. Work is neat and well presented. At all key stages, relationships with each other, their teachers and other adults are very good. Students are courteous and show respect for other people. They work very well with each other in pairs and help each other with their work. When given the opportunity, they take responsibility for their own work. They talk confidently about their work, explaining it coherently. The department is an orderly community with positive attitudes to work. The response of students with special educational needs is very good. Students enjoy their lessons and are proud of their achievements.
130. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and it is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. Teachers demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. They explain tasks clearly and use mathematical terms appropriately. The planning of the lessons is good and relates well to the National Curriculum. In the majority of lessons, teachers state what they expect students to have achieved and understood. There is good use of questioning to assess students' knowledge and understanding, as was the case in a Year 9 lesson where the teacher used challenging questions related to estimation and analysis to promote good understanding. Teachers manage the students very effectively, and this has a positive effect on the attitude of students to their work. In the most effective lessons, the pace is brisk and there is a good balance between explaining, discussing and individual practice so that students have a good understanding. In these lessons, the interest and motivation of students are maintained and this promotes very good progress in understanding. In all lessons, the relationship between students and staff is very good. Homework is set regularly and marked. It reinforces knowledge and understanding acquired during the lesson. Teachers generally use constructive comments on students' work that encourages them to progress and to extend their understanding. However this is not consistently applied.

131. The department is well managed and the quality of leadership is good. The staff work well together as a team. The department places great emphasis on raising achievement in mathematics and there are clear plans to improve attainment in the sixth form. There is a clear educational direction for the subject. There is a good working atmosphere in the department, attitudes to work are good and relationships between teachers, and teachers and students are very good. This leads to an effective learning environment.
132. Students have good levels of numeracy skills. They use them effectively in science when handling formulae. In design and technology, they demonstrate a good, wide use of measurement throughout the subject areas. Measurements are accurate and students make rapid progress in Year 7. In geography, graphical skills are sound at Key Stage 3 where they interpret and observe the change in water consumption over a 30 year span and in the sixth form when comparing data of three sites on beach profiles. In business education in the sixth form, students calculate changes in demand relative to price increases and plot graphs of the supply and demand accurately. They interpret the graphs to identify equivalent price and zones of excessive supply and demand.
133. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved significantly leading to a notable improvement in examination results at both Key Stage 3 and at GCSE.
143. **Science**
134. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportions of students at the age of 14 attaining Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were well above the national average. Whilst results have varied from year-to-year, the trend overall is one of improvement. The average National Curriculum points score attained by students in 1999 was well above the national average when compared with all schools and above average when compared with schools with students from similar backgrounds. Boys and girls results achieve similar results. Results in science are slightly below those in mathematics and English.
135. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C was above the national average. All students entered for the examination in either double or single science obtained a grade in the range A*-G, again above the national success rate. There has been a general improvement in success rates in the last three years but with 1998 being the most successful year. There is no significant difference in the results of boys and girls. Students' results in science were not significantly different from those they obtained in most other subjects in the school.
136. In 1999, results at GCE A-level in biology, chemistry and physics have shown a significant improvement since the last inspection, and particularly so in the last two years when the overall pass rate has been over 90 per cent. In the 1999 examinations, the proportion of students obtaining grades A or B was in line with national averages in biology and chemistry, and well above the national average in physics. All students entered for chemistry and physics obtained a pass grade, well above the national norm; in biology, the pass rate from a large entry was above the national figure. In the last two years, there have been no consistent differences in the results of boys or girls in any of these subjects. Attainment by sixth form students in other examinations such as GCE AS-level science in society, and GCSE human physiology and health, is satisfactory. Improvement has been particularly good in human physiology and health, though there were no passes at the higher grades in 1999. The department makes an effective contribution to the GCE A-level physical education course.
137. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students at Key Stage 3 are provided with a stimulating programme of work on entry to the school. A high proportion of lessons contains practical work. Students learn the skills of planning and carrying out scientific investigations, and are able to discuss maturely what their results indicate. They also develop knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics. Particularly high levels of attainment were seen in a lesson on acids and

alkalis, and when students considered the relationship between variables in a range of experiments.

138. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. By the age of 16, students undertake individual investigations as part of their GCSE assessment. They plan these investigations, make observations, undertake calculations, draw conclusions and evaluate their work. During revision lessons for forthcoming examinations, Year 11 students are provided with the opportunity to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of a range of topics. They discuss maturely their target grades for next summer.
139. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are above course expectations. Students work at a high level of understanding in GCE A-level lessons on enzymes, muscle action, cracking alkanes, and satellite orbits. High standards of work also occur in sixth-form GCSE courses, and in GCE AS-level lessons where students reflect on the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution on the Christian view of the Creation.
140. Attainment in science on entry to the school is broadly in line with national averages. Students make very good progress in Key Stage 3 with attainment well above average by the end of Year 9 in National Curriculum tests. Progress is good at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, very good progress is made, particularly in GCE A-level courses. The majority of students maintain their exercise books and folders in very good order, both boys and girls realising the importance of well-organised notes to help consolidate knowledge and understanding. Particularly good progress is made in lessons when the tasks set are at the appropriate level, challenging students to think, and when teaching strategies are interesting and varied. Examples of this occurred when an average attaining group in Year 9 studied cells and organs, a lower attaining group in Year 9 discussed the differences between metals and non-metals, and in sixth-form lessons on muscle action and on copper extraction. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students. They are well integrated into classes. Teachers are aware of their particular difficulties, and work closely with support staff to provide appropriate learning opportunities.
141. Students' attitudes are good. Students show a mature approach to their work, and form good working relationships with their teachers. They are encouraged to think carefully about their work, and to take some personal responsibility for planning and organising their studies. They work well to the end of each lesson, and enter and leave classrooms in an orderly manner. Behaviour is therefore normally very good, and the study of science is taken seriously. Students work particularly well in groups, sharing resources, discussing their work and co-operating closely in order to obtain accurate results. They listen carefully to their teachers, and also to other students. They respond particularly well during question and answer sessions, but there are insufficient occasions when they themselves ask questions. There is traditionally a good take up for GCE A-level subjects, especially biology.
142. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and it is good at Key Stage 4. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is very good, and students are taught in depth at all levels. Mostly, teachers have a high expectation of students, but occasionally they underestimate the pace at which students can progress. The planning of lessons is also very good, and sometimes exemplary. The organisation of practical sessions is calm but purposeful; teaching is thorough, but occasionally lacks flair. Teachers know individual students very well, and their management of students is sound. Most lessons are planned to allow time at the end for a summary of the work covered, and to discuss what has been learnt. The marking of students' work in exercise books and folders is variable across the department, and there is a number of grading systems in use. There are, however, many good examples of constructive comments to encourage students to improve. Teachers' planning often takes into account observations made during marking. The setting of homework is inconsistent, with insufficient emphasis given to providing interesting work, which poses a challenge for all levels of attainment.
143. The curriculum is well planned, and is subject to regular review to ensure it provides the most appropriate course for the students. A small group of students is recommended to take the single science option in Key Stage 4, when it is more appropriate for their needs. There are many classes in

Key Stage 3 which are taught by more than one teacher in a week. This has a negative impact on learning, as continuity is more difficult to maintain. There are a number of extra-curricular opportunities including a lively science club and GCSE astronomy classes at lunchtime, extra revision classes as examinations approach and an enjoyable science week each March. The department is involved in some interesting initiatives in information technology using palmtop computers to take readings and to plot temperature/time graphs. This work has helped to improve students' skills in interpreting graphs. Both teaching and non-teaching staff in the department have a positive approach towards development in information technology. Further development in this area is limited by a lack of funding. The overall impact of the leadership and management of subjects, and of the department, is good. There is a positive ethos within the department. The technicians are positive about their role, well organised, and make a significant contribution to the educational programme. The science department makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral and social education. Areas such as the environment, renewable and non-renewable energy, genetics, human relationships, and earth's position in space, figure prominently in the curriculum, and are taught sensitively.

144. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Since the last inspection, attainment has improved and is now consistently good in all key stages. Teaching is also more consistent across the age range, there is a far higher proportion of lessons that are satisfactory or better and boys and girls now make equal progress.

154. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

154.

Art

145. In the 1999 GCSE art and design (unendorsed) examination the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C was well above the national average. The proportion of students achieving A*-C in the art and design graphics examination was well below the national average. The proportion of students achieving A*-G in both examinations was above the national average. The attainment of GCSE students seen in lessons during the inspection is well above the average. Students' results in art were significantly better than those they obtained in most other subjects in the school. In 1999, results at GCE A-level were well above the national average.
146. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students effectively use a range of techniques and media and understand the visual language (tone, shape, form etc.), applying this sensitively when working in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials. For example in the Year 8 'perspective' project and the Year 9 work on Impressionism, students recognise and explain the different qualities in line and texture and make the important distinction between colour and tone. Their work clearly shows connections with and knowledge of the methods and approaches of other artists. This demonstrates a good improvement in this aspect of their work since the last report. Knowledge of contemporary artists and the cultural diversity of our society are currently underdeveloped. Expressive work and the experimental use of materials are also less well developed and workbooks could be more effectively used in connection with experimental work in the studio.
147. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are well above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. They have developed a very good range of skills especially in drawing and some exceptional examples were seen in portfolios and displayed. The most effective drawing is from direct observation, although some imaginative work and that done from memory is often good. Students' knowledge of other artists and designers is good and often informs their practical work and ideas. They have a very sound knowledge of the processes for research and developing ideas, which has a significant impact on their high attainment. During the inspection, Year 11 students were engaged in preparation for trial examinations and although most work satisfies the assessment criteria for the course, experimentation is in most instances tentative.
148. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are well above course expectations. Students have developed a broad knowledge of the subject. They work effectively in a range of media and show an understanding of art in contexts beyond school. Personal studies and

the interpretation and communication of their ideas are very good. Many students at this stage display exceptional skills in drawing, painting and composition.

149. Students make very good progress at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and good progress at Key Stage 4. The carefully structured projects and a range of teaching strategies ensure that lower attaining students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other students. The teachers promote rapid progress in some lessons where new learning is introduced with demonstration and examples and students' understanding is tested throughout the lesson with carefully pitched questions and support. During the 'Impressionist' project for example, experimentation with materials and techniques enhanced the progress of learning for all students and knowledge of the assessment criteria has an impact on the progress made by GCSE students. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls or by students from different ethnic backgrounds.
150. Students' attitudes are very good. Students at all levels are motivated and show interest in their work. Their willingness and co-operation with teachers and peers have a significant positive effect on the standards they achieve. In lessons, they listen carefully and are confident when answering questions. They respect the views of others and work collaboratively when required.
151. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and good at Key Stage 4. Some examples of excellent teaching were seen during the inspection. All lessons benefit from very clear planning which identifies the key learning objectives. In most cases these are shared and discussed with students and linked to previous learning. Teachers' knowledge of their subject informs all lessons and the range of methods they use ensures that new knowledge is carefully introduced and understood. Demonstrations of technique and examples of expected or possible outcomes give a clear indication of the high expectations teachers maintain. The pace of lessons is often brisk but teachers are sensitive to the needs of all students and intervene to support those who require additional help and guidance. When assessment is discussed with students, the progress and success of learning is enhanced, although this aspect of teaching requires further development to ensure students at all stages are aware of their strengths and weaknesses.
152. The subject is very well managed and the head of department provides support for all staff within an ethos where expectations are high. Planning is comprehensive and guidance on the content and delivery of projects forms the basis for the curriculum at all key stages. Teachers work effectively as a team whilst their individual contribution to the subject is recognised and encouraged. The frequent sharing of good practice, ideas and approaches should continue to ensure further development, success and improvement.
153. The department has made good progress since the last report. Standards of attainment and the quality of teaching have been maintained at a high level.
163. **Design and technology**
154. Overall, the proportions of students achieving grades A*-C and A*-G in GCSE examinations in 1999 were in line with the national average. However, results varied widely between the different subjects within design and technology. The results for food technology and for graphical products were well above the national average for GCSE grades A*-C whilst the results for systems and control were far below the national average. Overall, students' results in design and technology, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were not significantly different than those they obtained in other subjects. Girls' results are higher overall than boys' although both match their national averages. In 1999, results at GCE A-level are in line with national figures. Results have shown a slightly rising trend over the last three years.
155. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above the level expected for students of the same age nationally. At the age of 16, standards broadly match the levels expected but vary between the different subjects within design and technology. For example, they are well above average in food technology and well below average in systems and control, reflecting differences in the prior attainment of students taking the courses and students' ability to cope

with course requirements. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line with course expectations but again vary between the different subjects. Overall, practical skills are more thoroughly developed than design skills. Students develop particularly good understanding of materials, methods and processes. This is shown in the standards of finished products that are above average. For example at Key Stage 3 in a box construction project in resistant materials and in sixth-form textiles in very well made fashion designs. By the age of 19, higher attainers identify the forces acting in different structures and calculate the effects they will have. By the age of 16, project-planning folders in food technology have high quality presentation, that show detailed investigation, planning and accurate evaluation. Technical vocabulary is developed well as students move through the school so that by the time they reach the sixth form, students are able to explain their ideas articulately. Good use is made of knowledge and understanding from other subjects such as mathematics, to enable accurate measurement; high quality drawings reflect skills learnt in art.

156. Students enter the school with a wide range of previous experience. They make good progress at all key stages. They make rapid progress in acquiring skills in Year 7. Progress slows for some students in Year 8 because continuity is affected when classes are shared between teachers, some of whom are teaching outside their subject specialisms. Students with special educational needs are well supported and make similar progress to others in their classes. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls or by students from different ethnic backgrounds.
157. Students' attitudes are very good. Students' response in lessons is usually good, and in the sixth form, very good. Students are keen to learn and show lively interest and enthusiasm. They take pride in showing their work. The great majority work with concentration at a good pace. They take increasing responsibility for their work and organise themselves well. As they move through the school, they steadily develop their capacity for independent study. Relationships are good both with teachers and other students. They listen carefully to each other in discussion and respect each other's ideas. A key feature of the school is the way students support and help each other in practical work. The department makes a significant contribution to students' personal development.
158. The quality of teaching is good at all key stages; it is seldom less than satisfactory. Teachers have a very good command of their subjects and plan lessons effectively so that students acquire skills, knowledge and understanding progressively at good pace. They provide opportunities for creativity and the development of independence as designers and crafts people. The principal features which promote good progress are the enthusiasm teachers bring to their work, practical demonstrations which are matched to individual needs, a high level of individual support and day-to-day assessment which tells students clearly how to improve their work. On the rare occasion that teaching is less than satisfactory, it is because work is not matched closely enough to students' needs and pace is undemanding. Homework is used very effectively to prepare for practical tasks and to develop designs.
159. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Although management has improved since the last inspection, and there is an effective learning environment, the way in which management is shared leads to some confusion as to the direction the department should follow and how it should develop. This is particularly apparent in the range of courses provided at Key Stage 4 that creates difficulties for staffing; some courses, such as systems and control, are inappropriate for the students who are following them. Since the previous inspection, accommodation has been improved; access to appropriate information and communication technology equipment is still limited and the quality of teaching has improved.
169. **Geography**
160. In 1999, the proportions of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C were well above the national average and were in line at grades A*-G. Girls attained higher than boys at grades A*-C. Students' results in geography were not significantly different from those they obtained in most other subjects. There has been a progressive improvement in results at grades A*-C over recent years, though the 1999 results are lower than those achieved in 1998. In the 1999 GCE A-level examination, results were close to the national average and there has been a significant improvement in attainment at the higher A and B grades in recent years.

161. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. They use compass points and grid references to locate places and draw graphs to show climate and population patterns. Students acquire knowledge of places. They know about features of the local area and gain knowledge of contrasting world areas such as the tropical rain forests of Brazil. A minority of students do not have a secure understanding of how to use an atlas and knowledge of distant places. The written work for the majority of students is good, but in some instances is reduced by poor spelling.
162. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. In GCSE coursework they undertake in-depth study of topics, use a wide range of skills, particularly numerical skills, in handling data to research and report findings. Most students acquire a foundation of knowledge of physical geography and understand terms and processes involved in earthquakes and river patterns. Some students find difficulty in giving explanations and do not always link theoretical studies to places. Many have knowledge of the development characteristics of countries; they describe population graphs, but many are less successful in the interpretation of the patterns observed. Literacy skills are good with many students writing detailed accurate accounts.
163. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at age 19 are in line with course expectations. Students use a range of skills to undertake fieldwork research and present findings in well-structured accounts. Written work is detailed but on some occasions, the quality is reduced through insufficient analysis of findings and reference to places. Students are competent in note taking and essay writing, especially when re-drafted, is of a high standard.
164. Students make good progress at all key stages. Students make good progress in developing a range of geographical skills, particularly in using maps for research purposes. Most students, including those with special educational needs, learn to classify settlements by size and shape, though lower attaining students find difficulty in recognising patterns on maps. Higher attainers make rapid progress in planning and researching information on the development of tourism in Spain. Most students extend their knowledge of contrasting world regions and understand the characteristics of different stages of development of countries. Some students make effective use of computers to research topics to complement information from textbooks. At Key Stage 4, students extend their knowledge of terms and processes of erosion. They learn to apply theoretical studies to places such as the Dartmoor tors, and improve their knowledge of river valleys through local studies in Cheltenham. Effective progress is evident in Year 11 when resources give appropriate support and guidance and enable students to extend learning at home. Occasionally, progress of a minority is slow when concentration is not sustained and higher attaining Year 10 students are under-challenged when tasks are not commensurate with ability. Sixth-form students make gains in knowledge of a range of topics such as the causes of river flooding developed through case study. They learn to link cause and effect and show key features through annotated maps. Fieldwork skills develop from Key Stage 4 with students' setting and evaluating hypotheses. Good progress is evident in acquiring in-depth knowledge and evaluation of coastal management strategies in Norfolk, but is less evident when oral engagement is insufficiently developed. Occasionally, the high level of teacher contribution provides limited opportunities for students to develop and explain ideas. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls or by students from different ethnic backgrounds.
165. Students' attitudes are good. Students behave well, lessons proceed smoothly and the use of time is maximised. Most students show interest in the topics taught, particularly when given the opportunity to undertake individual or group work such as in a practical map-work activity in Year 7. At Key Stage 4, students respond positively to a well-prepared revision lesson on river development and sustain concentration throughout the lesson. Most work is neatly presented, but on occasions, in the absence of close monitoring, work is untidy and left incomplete. Written and illustrative work is mostly well presented. A minority of students who voluntarily return for additional revision sessions after school shows positive and responsible attitudes. Sixth-form students show a mature attitude to their studies. They listen attentively to explanations and to the contribution of others. Many students speak confidently but sometimes are reluctant to participate in discussion.

166. The quality of teaching is good at all key stages. All teachers are subject specialists and this makes a good contribution to the quality of learning and standards achieved. The most effective lessons are characterised by good planning which set appropriate challenges for students and proceed at a brisk pace. On some occasions however, planning is not fully effective, students sit passively for lengthy periods and the tasks set under-challenge higher attaining students. Much of students' work is supportively marked but the quality of marking is inconsistently applied across the subject. At Key Stage 4, good student-teacher relations helps create a positive learning ethos. Teacher-produced resources prepared for GCSE revision are good. They provide a focus for study and support students' independent learning programmes. Progress is less effective in lessons where teachers impart knowledge to the neglect of helping students to think through ideas to reach a conclusion. Teachers are experienced practitioners at GCE A-level and set appropriate standards in depth of subject treatment and intellectual challenge. Many opportunities are provided for students to link theoretical concepts to reality through fieldwork application that contributes to a broadening of experience and progress on the course. Some lessons however, are very teacher directed without full opportunity given for individual or group initiative.
167. The curriculum is enhanced by good provision for fieldwork experience across the 11 to 19 ages. The special educational need policy gives insufficient information on provision and how the subject will support progress in lessons. The time allocation at Key Stage 4 is below average and this reduces the opportunity for developing information technology opportunities and individual support in lessons. Leadership is effective, with practices established for communication and co-ordination of the department's work. The 'improvement plan' identifies agreed targets but strategies for measuring success are not specified. Resources for learning are satisfactory but there is insufficient access to information technology that is inhibiting the progress that students make in this aspect of the subject. The existing accommodation does not provide a positive learning environment and reduces opportunities for some practical teaching approaches.
168. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Since the last inspection, GCSE A*-C results have improved and attainment has risen at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Students are now making consistently good progress across all age groups. There was no overall judgement on teaching in the last report, but comments about under-development of strategies to meet the needs of students of different attainment and under-challenge remains to be addressed.
178. **History**
169. The proportion of students achieving grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 1999 was above the national average and the proportion of students achieving grades A*-G was close to the national average. Students' results in history were not significantly different from those of other subjects in the school, although in history boys achieved at a considerably higher level than girls. The proportion of students achieving grades A*-B in GCE A-level examinations in 1999 was significantly above the course average nationally, with boys achieving at a higher level than girls.
170. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 is above the level expected for students of the same age nationally in the key areas of knowledge and understanding, historical skills and communication of information. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students have a good level of knowledge and understanding of modern world history or the history of medicine, depending on the course for which they opt. They also have good source analysis skills and can communicate their knowledge and understanding effectively. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are above the level expected. Students display good knowledge and understanding of nineteenth century British and European history, in terms of both factual knowledge and interpretations, and they communicate their knowledge effectively.
171. Students enter the school with levels of attainment in history close to the average for students of a similar age nationally. They make good progress at Key Stage 3 in developing their knowledge and understanding of topics ranging from the ancient Romans through medieval to modern history. They

develop a facility for a range of historical writing, including answers to structured questions, essays and imaginary letters and posters displaying empathetic understanding with attitudes such as those of slaves in America. Students learn to consider the range of causes of events such as the Black Death, and they consider why sources might differ in their interpretation. Students do an increasing amount of extended writing, for example when considering the arguments for and against the building of railways in the nineteenth century. They develop confidence in expressing their opinions, as observed for example in a Year 9 lesson involving students in a role-play about an investigation into nineteenth century public health. Students develop a more sophisticated vocabulary, involving words and concepts like Revolution. Lower attaining students make limited progress because they have poor writing skills. However, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, particularly when they receive specialist support.

172. Students make good progress at Key Stage 4. They increase their skills of source analysis and evaluation, and learn to consider different interpretations of a significant individual, as seen in a Year 10 lesson on Stalin. They learn to appreciate a wider historical perspective when studying a topic such as anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany. Students studying medicine learn to appreciate the significance of the contributions of individuals like William Harvey and Pasteur. When studying the modern world, students learn to appreciate different interpretations of the Cold War. They develop increasing confidence in debate. Students at Key Stage 4 with special educational needs make good progress, particularly in extending their knowledge and understanding.
173. Students make good progress in the sixth form. They develop a detailed knowledge of various nineteenth and twentieth century topics. They develop confidence in making presentations, as seen in a lesson on the significance of particular individuals in Italian unification. Students develop a more sophisticated historical vocabulary and learn to make links between causes of events and to appreciate differences in interpretations, for example when studying British attitudes towards Hitler.
174. Students' attitudes are good at all key stages. Students are always well behaved and orderly, and listen well both to each other and the teacher. Students are responsive to questioning and enjoy giving their opinions. They respect the teachers, and consequently the quality of relationships within lessons is very good. Students concentrate well and collaborate effectively in pair and group work, as seen in the Year 9 debate on public health.
175. The quality of teaching is good at all key stages. Where teaching is good, it is characterised by several qualities. Teachers' planning is appropriate and objectives are made clear to students. The teaching is authoritative but relaxed, with excellent relationships with students, and this in turn contributes to good progress. There is effective questioning of students and monitoring of their progress. Progress is evaluated at the end of lessons. Teachers emphasise study and examination skills, which helps to improve student performance. Teachers explain what students need to do to improve their attainment, as seen for example in a Year 10 lesson on the Berlin Wall. Teachers emphasise that historical judgements should be based upon evidence and not unsubstantiated assertion. Homework is set when appropriate. Imaginative strategies are used, as for example when teaching Year 7 students about the hierarchy of Ancient Roman society, using a human pyramid. On the few occasions where aspects of teaching are less than satisfactory, either work of insufficient challenge is set for higher-attaining students or the tasks set, although appropriate in terms of National Curriculum content, are not sufficiently focused upon specific objectives or levels of attainment.
176. The large history department is effectively led. The head of department has had a significant impact on moving the department forwards. He has given considerable thought to developing a scheme of work and methods of assessment that will assist the future progress of students. Resources are adequate, although there are relatively few textbooks in some classes. The use of information technology is undeveloped, partly due to the difficulty of gaining regular access to teaching rooms with computers.
177. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. The last report judged standards in history to be sound, with a good standard of teaching. Overall, standards of attainment have improved since that inspection, and the relative lack of extended writing at Key Stage 3 has been successfully addressed, so that the department is making good progress. The quality of teaching has improved.

187. **Information technology**

178. The proportion of students achieving grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 1999 was far below the national average. The proportion of students achieving grades A*-G was in line with the national average. Students' results in information technology were significantly below those they obtained in most other subjects. Students' results were better than those achieved in 1998. In 1999, all candidates entered for either GCE A/AS level achieved a grade and almost all students achieved a grade in information technology, these results were in line with the course averages nationally. Students' results were better than those achieved in 1998.
179. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students log-on to the network and load the appropriate application. Their word processing skills are sound and they successfully use the desktop publishing package to enhance their work. Most students use the menu system and edit and format text proficiently. They construct basic databases and enter data and carry out simple sort and query routines. Higher attainers use Logo software effectively and understand variables. However, many middle and lower ability students struggle with this concept. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are well below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students' standards of attainment in the GCSE information technology course are well below the level expected. Most have a sound grasp of spreadsheet construction and basic formulae. However, during a revision lesson for a forthcoming examination, most students were unable to answer questions correctly because they had not covered the theory work previously. Students do not always complete coursework and this is one reason for results at GCSE being far below the national average. Students who do not study for GCSE have insufficient opportunities to develop their key skills. This is because planned opportunities are not provided for all students to practise and develop skills within the curriculum. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line with course expectations. Students have a good grasp of top-down design procedures. They are generally proficient in programming. Most understand the basic concepts of different counting systems.
180. Students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form but unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Students develop their information technology skills in Years 7 and 8 but do not have access to discrete information technology lessons in Year 9. This has an adverse impact on continuity of learning. Students with special educational needs make good progress at Key Stage 3 because of the good quality support provided by the learning support assistants. Insufficient opportunities are provided for all students to develop their skills at Key Stage 4 throughout the curriculum. Teachers do not plan tasks that challenge students, particularly higher attainers. Whilst many subjects do have aspects of information technology within their schemes of work, there are not enough computers available so that they can have regular access. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls or between students from different ethnic backgrounds.
181. Students' attitudes are satisfactory but do vary from very good through to unsatisfactory. Younger students are attentive and follow teachers' instruction carefully and enjoy their information technology experiences. Younger students are polite and courteous and appreciate the support of the teachers and other adults. They work co-operatively together, sharing ideas and experiences. Most are eager to answer questions and are confident enough to ask challenging questions of their teachers. They sustain their concentration for long periods and work diligently throughout. They respect the facilities that are provided for them. However, many students in Key Stage 4 are dissatisfied and on occasion, become disaffected as was the case in a Year 11 class when students paid little attention to the teacher. They do not complete homework or complete coursework. Sixth-form students have very good attitudes. They work independently of the teacher for long periods and take responsibility for their own learning when the teacher is absent.
182. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. When teaching is good, a range of activities are provided that help to sustain students' concentration. In a Year 8 lesson, students took part in practical computer activities and then took part in a discussion of the merits of databases; this enabled students to make good progress. Teachers make

effective use of praise and encouragement to motivate students. Homework is set appropriately and is relevant to the topic being covered. Marking is satisfactory and leads to accurate assessment by the end of Key Stage 3. Teachers have a sound command of the subject and are proficient in the use of a range of applications. They use this knowledge to good effect to help and support students when problems occur. When teaching is less than satisfactory, planning is poor. The scheme of work at Key Stage 4 is poor and one teacher does not use a scheme. This is having an adverse impact on standards, particularly for those students studying for GCSE. Some of the worksheets used in Years 7 and 8 are not appropriate to the students' needs and are not always at the correct level so that all students can understand what is required. Teachers normally convey aims and objectives for the lesson but occasionally students are unaware what the purpose of the lesson is. This was evident in a Year 7 class when students were unsure what the purpose of the word processing task was. The management of students is satisfactory but does vary from good through to unsatisfactory. When good, the teacher quickly establishes what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. When unsatisfactory management is evident, teachers allow students to continue to talk and do not gain the attention of the students. Teachers spend too much time working with students on an individual basis rather than refocusing the whole class. The pace of lessons is satisfactory but it is never rigorous and on occasion, it is rather pedestrian which leads to students making unsatisfactory progress.

183. The leadership and management of information technology is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient monitoring of information technology across the curriculum and the scheme of work for GCSE at Key Stage 4 is poor. There is no clear strategy for improving this situation. There are insufficient information technology facilities and this is having an adverse impact on students' progress and on the development of information technology within subjects. Statutory requirements for information technology are not met fully at Key Stage 4 because there are no planned opportunities for them to use computers in many subjects.
184. The subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. Skills in information technology are still under-developed at Key Stage 4, a criticism noted in the previous report. Opportunities for students to utilise their information technology skills within other subjects remain limited.
194. **Modern foreign languages**
185. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportions of students attaining grades A*-C in French and German were well above the national averages. The proportions of students attaining grades A*-G in French and German were in line with the national averages. The proportion of the year group entered for the full GCSE course was below that found nationally. In GCE-A level examinations, results were in line with the national average. Students' standards of attainment in examinations at both GCSE and GCE-A level have remained consistent over the last few years. Girls perform better than boys in these examinations but not by a greater margin than found nationally.
186. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Higher and middle attainers write accounts of a holiday or their daily routine using the past tense. They do this accurately and with good understanding of grammar and syntax. Most students speak and write using full sentences and form questions with reasonable accuracy. They have good listening skills and are generally used to hearing and understanding French and German for classroom instructions and simple explanations. Lower attaining students identify information in a simple recorded text and can write short sentences about people and places.
187. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students have good speaking and listening skills. They speak at length on prepared topics. Most students talk about themselves, their leisure activities and their likes and dislikes. They do this accurately and with good pronunciation. The standard of writing is good in both languages and in both key stages. Examples are very much in evidence in classroom displays. Students' work often shows their ability to write at length when given open-ended tasks. By the age of 16, lower attainers write a brief description accurately. At both key stages, girls

attain higher levels than boys but this matches the national situation.

188. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line with course expectations in both French and German. Students are generally competent and confident speakers. Their skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking are in line with examination requirements. They use the languages they are learning to discuss and write about contemporary issues such as the world of work, marriage, advertising, alcohol abuse and pollution.
189. Students make very good progress at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and good progress at Key Stage 4. This is because teachers generally have high expectations of what students are to achieve. For example, teachers require students to write and speak accurately, using full sentences. They also expect good pronunciation. Oral work tends to be rigorous and students make very good progress in their listening skills because of their constant exposure to the language being taught. Students who study both French and German in Key Stage 3 make good progress in their learning but the limited time available for each language means that some do not reach the highest levels. This is despite the high quality of the teaching and the brisk pace of the lessons. These students study two languages in the time normally allowed for one. Students with special educational needs receive sound support and also make very good progress. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls or by students from different ethnic backgrounds.
190. Students' attitudes are very good. They are strongly motivated and sustain concentration very well. They are usually very keen to take part in oral activities. Relationships between students are very good. This is strongly in evidence when students co-operate productively in pairs or groups. Lessons are characterised by very good relationships between teachers and students although there have been a small number of instances of tense relationships in Key Stage 4 which have still not yet been satisfactorily resolved. Behaviour in lessons is of a very high standard and students have positive attitudes to language learning.
191. The quality of teaching is very good in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and it is good at Key Stage 4. Teachers plan a variety of successful strategies to teach and consolidate vocabulary and structures. They have high expectations of students and provide tasks that are challenging to students of all attainment levels. There are frequent opportunities for students to speak in the language either in response to teachers' questions or in paired oral practice. Teachers are clear about what is to be taught and share these objectives with the students. Classes are well managed. Teachers give strong support through effective monitoring during lessons. They make good use of day-to-day assessment of students' work in their planning. Lessons move at a brisk pace so that good use is made of the time available. Teachers make routine use of the language being taught for general classroom instructions wherever possible. Good use is made of homework to support learning.
192. A comprehensive assessment policy is in place and the schemes of work for both languages ensure that all strands of the subject are taught. This results in a broad and balanced subject curriculum and the requirements of the National Curriculum are being met. Students are given opportunities to use information technology to support their learning. They have access to the Internet for research purposes and many students word-process their work. There is, however, only limited interactive software.
193. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Students' standards of attainment have been maintained at a high level and the level of students' reading and writing skills in Key Stage 3 has improved. The quality of teaching has improved.

203. **Music**

194. In 1999, the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A*-C was far below the national average, but the proportion attaining grades A*-G was in line with the national average. Students' results in music, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were significantly worse than those obtained in other subjects. In the 1999 GCE A-level examination, only two students, from an original cohort of four, completed the course. The small number of students in classes makes statistical comparisons unreliable.
195. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students select and combine resources to make an expressive use of musical elements in their compositions and also maintain their own part vocally and instrumentally in individual and ensemble work. During lessons and performances, they listen attentively, critically appraise themselves and their peers, and then describe the music using an appropriate vocabulary. Students make an appropriate use of information technology in performance, composition and research. However, setting arrangements for music in Year 9 has created a significant group of lower attaining students whose level of attainment is far below the level expected for students of the same age nationally. For these students, their vocal skills are very poor with the majority unable to sing with any regard to phrasing, breathing, dynamics or the performances of others. These students perform instrumentally with a lack of confidence and little, or no, awareness of pulse or rhythm.
196. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally. They analyse the structure of songs, recognising musical devices and structures, and then applying them to their own compositions. Students use a wide and appropriate musical vocabulary in appraising and analysis. They recognise major forms and periods of music and are aware of time signatures, but are less confident with key signatures and the relationship of minor keys and chromatic scale construction. Students compose using a wide range of instruments and both hand-written and computer generated scores are used to record and develop their ideas.
197. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are below course expectations. They recognise and construct harmonic and chromatic intervals and also simple atonal melodies. In composition and arrangement, they use a variety of ideas with alternate harmonies to create extended pieces. In listening exercises, they recognise orchestrations, periods, forms and styles. Although students can make simple transpositions in performance from arrangements in concert pitch, there is some insecurity in completing this successfully without the assistance of the teacher. They are also less secure in independently analysing music at an advanced level harmonically.
198. Students make good progress at all key stages. However, during the week of the inspection, the progress of students observed in lessons varied from excellent to very poor. In Key Stage 3, they acquire and develop skills in performing vocally and instrumentally, and these skills are then consolidated and applied to their composing. They use and understand skills in analysis and evaluation and can explain reasons for decisions in their choice of instruments. However, in those lower ability sets in Year 9 where progress is unsatisfactory to very poor, students make little or no progress in consolidating or developing their skills in singing or instrumental performance. In Key Stage 4, students consolidate and develop their skills in composition whilst utilising their instrumental and vocal skills. Students in Year 10 are making excellent progress in lessons in acquiring an understanding of song structure in popular styles. However, there is some unsatisfactory progress in the short GCSE course, where students are not adequately consolidating their knowledge and skills in historical analysis. Sixth-form students develop and consolidate skills in arranging and also performance. They make good gains in the skills required to transpose in performance and in appraising where their analytical skills are being revisited, consolidated and then developed. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls or by students from different ethnic backgrounds.
199. Students' attitudes are good. However, within this, there is a great variance in the response of students. In Key Stage 3, it varies between very good to an example in a Year 9 lesson which is very poor. At

Key Stage 4, the response is never less than good and in the sixth form it is very good. Students work with interest, enjoyment and enthusiasm. They select and use resources appropriately and display good levels of collaboration in group and class work where they take note of the views and ideas of others and negotiate to create a desired end result. The majority of students are willing to take responsibility for their own assessment and appraisal. In these lessons, there are good relationships between students, and students and teachers. However, in the Year 9, lower attaining sets, where the response observed is very poor, the majority of students show poor respect for others by not listening attentively and talking during performances and explanations. In these lessons, there are very poor levels of behaviour with students displaying disinterest and a reluctance to answer questions and participate in the lesson.

200. The quality of teaching is good overall at all key stages. However, teaching varies between excellent and very poor. Teaching which is at least good is characterised by the teacher's very good understanding of subject allied with high expectations of students. The lessons are well planned to cater for a range of abilities of students, with work which challenges them and encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning, appraisal and assessment. This good teaching makes an effective use of question and answer and the lessons are conducted at good pace with a variety of inter-related tasks. The grouping of students is effective and students are encouraged and supported to work and create together by effective teacher intervention. There are clear targets to the lessons and good use is made of the available resources and accommodation, with homework being used effectively to inform teaching and consolidate and extend students' learning. However, where the teaching is less than satisfactory, discipline is not always appropriate or students under full control, for example, misdemeanours are not corrected or challenged and students continually talk amongst themselves during the lesson and performances. These lessons are conducted at an inappropriate pace, for example in a Year 10 lesson, the tasks were too advanced for the students and the pace too fast to allow consolidation and offered few opportunities for the students to ask questions, whereas in a Year 9 lesson, the work did not challenge the students and the pace was very slow. In Key Stage 3, there is an inconsistency in the rigour in marking students' books, with some books unmarked by teachers this term.
201. Students are taught in mixed ability groups in Years 7 and 8 but a decision this year by the department has led to setting in Year 9. This has created large classes of low attaining students. Along with the poor behaviour observed in these classes, this has resulted in the poor progress and attainment observed in these groups. This is exacerbated by there being no in-class support allocated for those students identified with special needs in these lessons. The department offers a very wide range of high quality extra-curricular provision and instrumental tuition, which makes a significant contribution to the experience and attainment of many students, and in particular, those students studying for GCSE and GCE A-level examinations. The department collects and collates a wide range of assessment information, but this is not yet fully used effectively to inform curriculum planning and neither is the level of attainment of the students on entry in Year 7 assessed. The annual reports to parents give indications of National Curriculum equivalent levels. However, comments are not student specific enough and do not give details of what a student can and cannot do, or what they need to do to improve. Overall, the teaching within the department is not adequately supported or monitored. There is insufficient specialist accommodation available for practical music when more than one lesson is timetabled simultaneously and the lack of adequate soundproofing in the department makes listening work difficult when practical work is taking place at the same time.
202. The last inspection report described attainment at age 14 as being in-line with national expectations; this is still the case. However, it described attainment at age 16 as being at or above national expectations, recent GCSE examination results have been significantly below national expectations but students observed during the inspection were attaining at levels in-line with that expected of students of the same age nationally. This would indicate a slight downward trend since the last report, allowing for the varied cohorts that opt to take music GCSE.

212. **Physical education**

203. GCSE was taken for the first time in 1999, and the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C was well below the national average, although all students who entered gained a pass at grades A*-G. Boys outperform girls in this examination, but there is little difference between the performance of students from different ethnic groups. Students' results in physical education were significantly below those they obtained in most other subjects. The 1999 GCE A-level results were in line with the national average. As in previous years, all students who entered the examination gained a grade.
204. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are at the level expected for students of the same age nationally. By the age of 14, students have a satisfactory understanding of the effect of exercise on the body. They know how to warm up before the lesson, and can perform the appropriate exercises correctly. Standards in games are satisfactory overall, with the best attainment in team games. Many students perform skilfully and show good understanding of the principles of play in the major games. This was well illustrated in netball, as students applied their signalling and dodging skills successfully in the game. Decision making skills develop well in most games lessons as students plan for performance and refine their skills in the context of tactical play. Good standards are attained in rugby where Year 8 students, including some identified as having special educational needs, demonstrated effective tackling and defence co-ordination in practice. Attainment in an individual game, such as badminton, is less satisfactory. The majority of students have not yet mastered the basic skills and knowledge of the game, which inhibits their effectiveness in play. Sound standards are attained in gymnastics, where most students of all abilities show good control and body tension as they perform a partner balance, and progress to building a sequence. Students make a good beginning in dance. They show a sense of rhythm and good use of dynamics as they create their own group dance, and evaluate each others' work sensitively. Planning and performance skills are developing satisfactorily in almost all lessons, but students' skills of evaluating their own and others' work are still under developed, as reported in the previous inspection. There is still a lack of opportunity for students to observe, analyse and comment on performance against specific criteria.
205. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above the level expected nationally. By the age of 16, students in the core physical education programme attain good standards in team games. Tactical awareness develops alongside technical skills and a high standard of play is seen in the inter-house basketball competitions. Students apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics effectively in all the major team games. Standards in GCSE practical coursework are above average, and written coursework reflects a sound knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. The differences in attainment of current GCSE students, observed during the inspection, and the 1999 results, can be accounted for by the teachers' too exacting assessment of the students' practical work in this, their first experience of the GCSE examination. Boys outperformed girls in the examination because many girls with good practical ability elected to pursue other courses.
206. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line with the levels expected nationally in theoretical aspects, and above in practical work. By the age of 19, GCE A-level students attain high standards in their chosen sports, and written coursework indicates a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. Students who elect to follow the Community Sports Leaders' Award course show a good knowledge of communication skills which they put into practice confidently as they take a leadership role in organising small group activities.
207. Standards in extra-curricular sport are very high, and many students gain representative honours at district, county, regional and national level. The school currently has 42 students representing Gloucestershire in rugby, soccer, hockey, netball, cricket, athletics and cross-country running.
208. Students' make very good progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form but unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. Students' progress in lessons is good in Key Stage 3, but progress in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory overall because the boys' curriculum does not meet statutory requirements, and these students make unsatisfactory progress. Progress is at least good in lessons because most students

respond well to good and often very good teaching, work at a demanding pace and make effective use of opportunities for practice. Students make clear gains in knowledge, skills and understanding in the majority of lessons; boys and girls are taught separately, but make equally good progress. Discernible progress by students of all levels of attainment is evident in most lessons, as they consolidate their knowledge and skills through practice. This was well illustrated in a rugby lesson where higher attaining students planned ahead, communicated with each other and moved into position to receive the ball effectively. Lower attainers make good progress when learning is clearly structured to provide a balance between the challenge of new skills and building on prior learning. This was well illustrated in gymnastics where well designed tasks focussed students' attention on the key learning targets and linked them into a logical sequence. However, students' capacities for observation, analysis and evaluation do not progress at the same rate as their planning and performance skills. As students move through each key stage, they apply previous knowledge to new situations, acquire new skills and develop understanding well. The majority of students make particularly good progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 in team games. Students identified as having special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme and progress at the same rate as their peers. Extensive opportunities are available for students of all ages and abilities to participate and progress in a variety of sports through the extra-curricular programme. Most students who take advantage of these opportunities, estimated to be about three-quarters of the school's population, make very good progress.

209. Students have very good attitudes to learning; they are well motivated and take their work seriously. These positive attitudes are reflected in very good behaviour, and a high level of active participation in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Students respond well to the good-humoured encouragement of the teachers, maintaining the brisk pace of work and high standards expected of them. In many lessons, students show a strong sense of commitment to their work, sustain concentration and often take a pride in their performance. However, in some lessons, students are passive learners. Effective and co-operative partner and group work is a feature of most lessons, well illustrated in gymnastics and dance; good teamwork develops in games. Students respond well to opportunities to take responsibility, but these are limited in lessons. Extra-curricular activities are well supported by students, and this reflects their enjoyment and commitment to the subject. Sixth formers regularly help with extra-curricular activities.
210. The quality of teaching is good overall in Key Stage 3, and very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teachers have a good command of the subject, reflected in clear objectives, shared with the students, and good planning for progression in performance. The majority also has a sound awareness of the National Curriculum requirements to involve students in the continuous process of planning, performing and evaluating their own and others' work. However, lesson planning, and the schemes of work do not consistently reflect all three of these strands in the learning process, and the weaknesses reported in the previous inspection, that students have insufficient opportunity to contribute to their own learning in some lessons, and have limited opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work, still exist at Key Stage 3. A notable strength in teaching is the excellent standard of discipline, which is maintained in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Relationships between the teachers and students are very good, and this supportive environment contributes significantly to the high standards of dress, participation and behaviour in the department. Teaching strengths include high expectations of all students; a demanding pace of learning in most lessons and perceptive observation, assessment and feedback which help students to improve their work. Lively, enthusiastic teaching, which motivates students and stimulates learning, is a feature of the majority of lessons.
211. The strongest teaching has a clear focus to the lesson, students are challenged intellectually, as well as physically, and learning targets, which match students' abilities, are set. This was well illustrated in a GCE A-level soccer lesson in which the teacher's skilful, probing questioning addressed individual needs in a mixed ability group of students, analysing their own performance. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of teaching strategies to enable students to take some responsibility for their own learning, for example, in a gymnastics lesson where students' evaluation of each others' work played a central role in the learning process and contributed to very good progress. This was also a particularly strong feature of the teaching in the Community Sports Leaders' Award course. Another example of good practice supported the school's literacy policy by enabling students to observe, analyse and

discuss their work and to identify key words and phrases that evaluated concisely what they had observed. Where teaching is less satisfactory, this relates to low expectations of students, poor planning and organisation of tasks, leading to restlessness and lack of progress in the lesson.

212. The head of department has been in post for a year, and recognises the deficiencies in the management of the subject. His leadership is already giving clear direction for the department, and the staff forms a strong and highly committed team. There is a very good ethos, which promotes an expectation of high standards in all aspects of the work of the department. As identified in the previous inspection, the management and development of the National Curriculum is still at an early stage. The Key Stage 3 boys' curriculum does not meet statutory requirements, because insufficient time is allocated within the subject to one of the Programmes of Study. The curriculum is also unbalanced, with a strong bias towards team games. Schemes of work have been rewritten, but give insufficient guidance on the implementation of the planning and evaluating aspects of the learning process, and this is reflected in lesson planning. Progress has been made in developing an assessment policy and procedures for assessment at Key Stage 3, but assessment criteria, linked to the National Curriculum end of Key Stage description, are still required. Health and safety risk assessments have not yet been carried out in all physical activities. Indoor accommodation for physical education has greatly improved and contributes significantly to the high standards in practical work. However, the department needs a classroom base to accommodate examination groups, as this could help produce the required improvement in GCSE results.
213. The department's outstanding commitment to extra-curricular sport is a strength of the school; many teachers, both within and from outside the department, give generously of their time to provide an impressive and successful programme, leading to excellence in a wide range of sports.
214. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Students' standards of attainment at Key Stage 3, and in the core programme at Key Stage 4 are similar to those observed in the previous inspection. There has been a decline in the examination results in the sixth form. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
224. **Religious education**
215. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C was well above the national average and that for grades A*-G above the national average. Students' results in religious education were significantly above those they obtained in most other subjects. Boys' results were broadly in line with girls'. At GCE A-level, the results for the small number of candidates were above the national average.
216. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above that expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Student have a sound and secure knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and the other world faiths. They correctly identify their founders, sacred books and more important rituals like baptism and Holy Communion. They give examples of the way in which religious belief affects lifestyles and appreciate something of the significance for participants of experiences such as pilgrimages and fasting. They have a good technical vocabulary and higher attainers question and evaluate what they are learning with confidence. They have less appreciation of the mystery and celebration that accompanies religious experience.
217. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above the level expected, particularly for those students following the GCSE course. They have a deeper knowledge of Christianity and Hinduism and of how believers in these two faiths approach ultimate questions of life and death and issues such as man's stewardship of the environment. The attainment of students studying religious education as part of a general studies course is satisfactory. They have learnt about differing views of moral issues and personal life such as marriage and the family but cannot with confidence relate them to religious teaching and belief. They are less able than students on the GCSE course to relate what they are studying to their own lives.
218. By the age of 19, the attainment of students following the GCE A-level course in Theology and the

Philosophy of Religion is above the course expectations. They have very good subject knowledge and are developing a sound understanding and appreciation of the classic theories and arguments involved in the philosophy side of the course.

219. At Key Stage 3 students of all attainment make very good progress. In addition to good subject knowledge and understanding, highest attainers develop the ability to evaluate what they are learning and explore the significance of faith for believers. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs make good progress because teachers adapt materials to their needs and provide sensitive support. In setted classes, language and challenge are well matched to the attainment of students. Regular reviews and assessment tasks help students to consolidate their knowledge. Where progress in individual lessons is less good, it is usually because the lessons are located far outside the subject base. This inhibits the use of the more imaginative and stimulating teaching methods.
220. At Key Stage 4, students following the GCSE course make very good progress thanks to well planned teaching and course work and excellent revision aids. Those following the general studies course make satisfactory progress. The difference is largely due to the way in which the course is organised in the timetable and the absence of a clearly defined aim such as an external examination. Students of all attainments in a class make similar progress.
221. In the sixth form, students following the GCE A-level course make very good progress due to their commitment and to well-informed and exciting teaching. However, the majority of students in the sixth form make no progress in religious education because there is no provision for them to study it.
222. Students' attitudes are very good. They are extremely well behaved and come to lessons prepared to learn. Many state that they enjoy the subject and one student in the sixth form said that it 'blew her mind'. This interest results in significant numbers choosing to study the subject for public examinations. Students listen effectively to teachers and to their peers, showing respect for the views and beliefs of others. They respect property, textbooks and religious artefacts. Written work is well presented. In class, many are willing to ask questions and to offer relevant suggestions. Homework is completed to a good standard with many examples of extended high quality work and the use of information technology for research and presentation. Virtually all can collaborate effectively and remain focused on tasks. By the end of Key Stage 3, most can plan individual research using time and a variety of information sources effectively. Only in the Key Stage 4 general studies course is their attitude less satisfactory with students in some classes showing a lack of interest and involvement.
223. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is very good. Class management is firm but friendly. Well-planned and stimulating lessons based on teachers' good subject knowledge feature high expectations and effective use of time. Students are expected to grapple with issues such as when Year 8 students were asked to write a response to the question 'Is life a test?' A variety of interesting teaching methods is used. There is a good stock of books and artefacts that are used to encourage students to investigate topics, assimilate knowledge and develop understanding. Interesting and relevant homework is regularly set and work is marked in an informative and helpful manner. Work is matched closely to the attainment of students so that higher attainers are challenged whilst those with lower attainment and with special educational needs are adequately supported. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the quality of teaching of examination courses is very good. The excellent subject knowledge of teachers enables them to explore the subject in depth with their students and to present the subject in a stimulating manner that excites students' interest. Expectations are high. Course work is well planned and informative marking helps students to improve their work. Teaching is enriched by visits to places of worship and by links with other schools and colleges. The quality of teaching in the Key Stage 4 general studies course is usually good but is not consistent across all classes. In some, expectations are lower and learning outcomes for lessons are not defined closely enough. There is a lack of rigorous marking and assessment of this course.
224. The contribution that the subject makes to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. With considerable emphasis placed on ensuring that students understand that religious faith affects one's beliefs, practices and lifestyle. An extra-curricular club gives opportunities for a significant number of students to explore and practice with enjoyment their developing religious faith.

225. The subject enjoys very good leadership and management that has established a positive ethos. Staff are enthusiastic and morale is high. Teachers are active in seeking ways to further improve standards. Resources are well deployed and the school's failure to fully satisfy statutory requirements lies outside the responsibility of the subject's manager. Shortfalls in specialist staffing and accommodation have some adverse effect on standards.
226. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The subject has continued to raise standards since the last inspection. Much work has been done to design a relevant course of religious education for all students at Key Stage 4 but there is still need for the school's management to provide a more effective framework for its teaching. Religious education is still not provided for the majority of students in the sixth form.
236. **Business Studies, economics and other sixth form areas**
227. The school provides a range of vocational and other courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 4, they include GCSE's in business studies, sociology and office applications. GNVQ courses are taught in business studies and, since 1999, leisure and tourism. GCE A-level courses are provided in business studies, economics, sociology, psychology and law at advanced supplementary level. RSA courses incorporate both Key Stage 4 students and sixth-form students.
228. In 1999, the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C in business studies is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of students achieving grades A*-G was above the national average. Students' attainment is marginally below their attainment in other subjects and the results are consistent with those achieved in 1998. In 1999, the proportion of students attaining grades A*-C in sociology is significantly above the national average and students achieve appreciably higher than they do in their other subjects. The results are an improvement on those of 1998. Almost all students achieved a pass in the 1999 RSA awards, continuing the trend over the recent years. In GNVQ business intermediate, two candidates achieved distinction and two a pass, which represents an improvement in the quality of grades on 1998. The proportion of students in GCE A-level business studies attaining grades A-E is broadly in line with the national average but below at grades A and B. Students did less well in the subject compared to their average attainment in other subjects and the results are lower than in 1998. The proportion of students in GCE A-level economics in 1999 achieving grades A-E is above the national average and attainment at A and B grades is equal to the national average. The results are an improvement on 1998, and students did better in economics compared to their average attainment in other subjects. The proportion of students in GCE A-level sociology attaining grades A*-C in the 1999 examination is well above the national average, with half of the candidates entered achieving grades A or B passes. The results are an improvement on those achieved in recent years. In GCE A-level psychology the average points score is in line with the average attainment for similar subjects with one in three students attaining grades A or B.
229. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment in GCSE business studies are in line with that expected of students aged 16 nationally. In GCE A-level sociology and economics, attainment is above that expected of students aged 19 nationally, whilst in GCE A-level business studies, students' attainment is in line with that expected nationally. In the GNVQ courses, attainment is in line with the national course average.
230. Students make good progress in GCSE and GCE A-level business studies, GCE A-level sociology and in GNVQ business and satisfactory progress in leisure and tourism. They make very good progress in GCE A-level economics. In GCSE business, students learn a range of business terms and understanding of the organisation and roles of business hierarchies is enhanced through challenging questioning and clear explanations, though sometimes limited opportunities for initiative and self-expression reduces potential progress in the lesson. Students with special educational needs make gains commensurate with other students through teacher support and guidance. In GCE A-level business, progress is evident when students apply theoretical studies about management strategic planning to the school context, though elsewhere progress is slow for lower attaining students when recall of some basic terms and principles is insecure.

231. GNVQ students make satisfactory progress in understanding about links between production and employment in the economy and develop computer skills in studies about cash flow in a business enterprise. On some occasions however, progress is less evident in the absence of opportunity to develop independent learning skills. In leisure and tourism, there is a need to improve students' action planning skills in developing a research activity to identify and plan a social function. Students in GCE A-level economics make very good progress in studies about demand and supply issues through challenging and engaging questioning which moves learning briskly forward.
232. Students' attitudes are good in GCSE business; GCE A-level business and sociology; and GNVQ courses. It is very good in GCE A-level economics. GCSE students are well behaved, listen to explanations, but progress slows when some find difficulty in sustaining their concentration. In GCE A-level business, students engage productively in group discussions and show a mature attitude to their studies but sometimes there is over-reliance on teacher leadership and support in lessons with limited initiative being shown. GNVQ students make gains in self-reliance for research and planning of assignments, but the development of independent learning skills is not fully evident in portfolios. GCE A-level economics students reveal a mature, sensible approach to their studies and written work is well presented.
233. In GCSE business and GCE A-level economics, teaching is very good, whilst in GCE A-level business and sociology and in the GNVQ courses, teaching is good. Teachers are appropriately qualified in the respective subjects and in GNVQ. Effective teaching in GCSE and A-level business and economics is characterised by well-qualified and experienced teachers who set high standards and intellectual challenge. On some occasions in A-level business however, progress is reduced by limited student engagement. The strength of the teaching is the promotion of student understanding through the vocational context and students are guided to make appropriate links orally and in assignments. In GNVQ, the teacher role as 'facilitator' is incorporated into planning and students are beginning to be encouraged to develop self-evaluation of their work. On some occasions in GCSE and GCE A-level courses, teachers talk for lengthy periods tending to impart knowledge with insufficient challenge and engagement.
234. The schemes of work provide detailed information and guidance on the work to be covered, though there is a lack of information on strategies to meet the needs of students of different ability at Key Stage 4. The use of computers to support learning is identified in broad terms. There are sound, established practices to monitor progress and assess attainment. The department analyses its results carefully, except for gender, and sets strategies for improvement. Management and leadership of the department are very good and this has a significant impact on the quality of provision and standards achieved. Morale is high. The stock of resources is good and the new, purpose built accommodation provides a positive learning environment. Staffing is a strength of the provision and this is important in raising student confidence and morale.
235. There was no report on vocational subjects at the last inspection in 1995 and thus it is not possible to make a judgement on improvement.

245. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

245. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

236. The team consisted of 15 inspectors who spent 65 inspector days in the school. During the week, 260 lessons were seen. Inspectors also attended many registration periods and observed a number of assemblies. All full-time teachers were seen teaching at least once and most were seen on several occasions. As many part-time teachers as possible during the week were also seen teaching. In addition, extra-curricular activities were visited. Sixty-six planned discussions were held with teachers, the Chair and other representatives of the governing body and with non-teaching staff. Inspectors looked at the written work of many students in class. All the work of a representative sample of six students from each year group was inspected. Planned discussions were held with these students and informal discussions with many more. A large amount of documentation supplied by the school was examined before and during the inspection. The Registered Inspector and his deputy held a meeting attended by 37 parents and the team considered 599 responses from parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school. These are published as part of the report.

246. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

246. **Pupil data**

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1636	25	122	78

246. **Teachers and classes**

246. **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	99.3
Number of students per qualified teacher:	16.48

246. **Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of education support staff:	10
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	294

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	79.2
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Average teaching group size:	KS2	
	KS3	26
	KS4	22

246.

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
	£
Total Income	4209206
Total Expenditure	4180509
Expenditure per student	2621
Balance brought forward from previous year	243327
Balance carried forward to next year	272024

246. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1636

Number of questionnaires returned: 599

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	18	8	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	27	61	7	4	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	15	54	23	7	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	14	60	16	10	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	20	58	14	7	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	26	64	7	3	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	30	57	9	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	19	62	9	8	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	24	57	14	4	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	25	61	10	3	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	29	58	7	4	2

246. **Other issues raised by parents**

- . Students' attain good examination results.
- . Students' attitudes are very good.
- . The help and guidance that students receive is very good.
- . Students' behaviour and attendance are very good.
- . Excellent extra-curricular provision.
- . The quantity of homework that is set is inconsistent.