

INSPECTION REPORT

Trinity School
Carlisle

LEA area: 909 Cumbria

Unique Reference Number: 112429

Inspection Number: 185474

Headteacher: Mr. M.A. Gibbons

Reporting inspector: Mr. L. Waters

Dates of inspection: 15th – 19th November, 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708075

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Abbreviations used in this report:

GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
NNEB	National Nursery Education Board
PSME	Personal, social and moral education

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Strand Road Carlisle Cumbria CA1 1JB
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body at the above address
Name of chair of governors:	Canon Rex Chapman
Date of previous inspection:	May 1995

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		Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Staffing, accommodation and learning
Mr. A. Baynes		Provision for pupils with special educational
Mr. A.M. Berkeley Mr. G. Clark	Information technology Business education Economics	
Mr. P. Clewes Mr. D.R. Downey	Design & technology History	Teaching Key Stage 4 provision
Mr. K.G. Hedger Mrs. A.C. Malcolm Mr. C. Mathews Mr. M. McAleavy Mr. N. Rathmell Mr. S.R. Rogers Mr. J. Seymour Mr. S. Smith Mr. C.R. Warn	Mathematics English Physical education Modern foreign languages Music Geography Science Art Personal, social and health	Attainment and progress The curriculum and assessment Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural Sixth form provision

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MAIN FINDINGS

There are more higher-achievers among the pupils starting Year 7 than in most schools. This proportion reduced steadily from 1995 to 1998 but rose again in 1999.

What the school does well

- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils are reaching or exceeding expected standards at the end of Year 9.
- Pupils in all years are making good progress and have positive attitudes to learning.
- The consistent quality of teaching is a strength of the school.
- Language college status has led to exemplary use of technology in language teaching and is broadening pupils' horizons through increasing international links.
- Pupils receive high-quality advice and guidance.
- The school is imaginatively and energetically led and effectively managed.
- There is an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities.

~~There are very constructive partnerships between the school and the local community.~~

• Where the school has weaknesses

- I. A higher proportion of pupils fail to achieve any GCSE (or equivalent) results at the end of Year 11 than in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds nationally.
- II. The methods used to assess the progress of pupils across subjects, especially in Years 7 to 9, are inconsistent.
- III. There is insufficient use of information technology within several subjects.
- IV. In some cases the use made of tutorial time is insufficiently productive.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses, and is continuing to improve. There are no aspects of the school which are unsatisfactory. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be addressed. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

• How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made good progress with improvements since 1995. Pupils' standards of work in Years 10 to 13 remain high and have risen significantly in Years 7 to 9. The quality of teaching is now more consistent across all years and retains some excellent features. The curriculum is broader and now meets statutory requirements. The quality of leadership has been strengthened at all levels and an appetite for continued improvement fostered. The site is used more efficiently and a good start has been made on upgrading computers for learning. Arrangements for providing pastoral support to pupils are better. GCSE targets for 2000 are broadly appropriate. The school has clear and realistic plans for development and is well-placed to secure further improvements.

• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18-year-olds in national tests and GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999 (1998 in brackets).

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	
			<i>well above average</i>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
			<i>average</i>	C
			<i>below average</i>	D
			<i>well below average</i>	E
Key Stage 3 Test	A (A)	A (A)		
GCSE Examinations	B (C)	C (E)		
A/AS – levels	C (A)			

Results in Key Stage 3 tests are above the national average in all three core subjects (English, mathematics and science) with boys doing particularly well. The results are rising more rapidly than the national trend. GCSE results from 1995 to 1998 have been just above the national average and have risen in 1999. They are broadly in line with those of similar schools. However, a higher-than-average number of pupils fail to obtain any GCSE (or equivalent) qualifications. In the sixth form, A-level results are above the national average and were very high in 1998. Most pupils completing GNVQ courses do well, although a relatively high proportion drop out early in some subjects.

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in **:
Years 7-9	good	• Art; French; Spanish; history; physical education	personal and social education
Years 10-11	good	Geography; design & technology; French, Spanish	
Sixth form	good	Geography; art; drama; French	
English	good		
Mathematics	good		

*** In this school “least effective” nevertheless represents satisfactory.*

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. ‘Satisfactory’ means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses. Minority subjects which received very few observations have been excluded from the table.

V. Teaching was at least satisfactory in over 97% per cent of lessons. In 26% per cent it was very good or excellent. Teachers are knowledgeable and lessons are organised well.

VI. There are no subjects where a significant proportion of the teaching is unsatisfactory.

• **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

• Aspect	• Comment
Behaviour	Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, behave considerately and relate well to each other and their teachers.

Attendance	The attendance rate is average by national standards.
Ethos*	There is a growing commitment to the values of a Church of England school and an effective mission to increase international connections.
Leadership and management	The aims are ambitious and are being reached thanks to energetic and decisive leadership, especially by the headteacher.
Curriculum and assessment	The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets all statutory requirements. There are important new developments in modern foreign languages and vocational subjects.
Pupils with special educational needs	The learning requirements of pupils on the register of special educational needs are satisfactorily met in most subjects.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good opportunities are provided for pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities for their spiritual development are satisfactory and improving.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staff are well-qualified and well-deployed. Buildings and equipment are adequate and used well.
Value for money	The school makes efficient use of the resources available and provides 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	What some parents are not happy about
<p>VII. Expectations are high and most pupils achieve well.</p> <p>VIII. The school promotes high standards of behaviour and encourages pupils to act responsibly.</p> <p>IX. Parents are kept well-informed about their children's progress and about school events.</p> <p>X. Pupils receive helpful advice and support.</p> <p>XI. In many cases homework is appropriately set and marked.</p> <p>XII. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available.</p> <p>XIII. This is a school that is continually getting better.</p>	<p>XIV. Pupils would benefit from more access to there are no specialist training sessions.</p> <p>XV. Pupils sometimes find it unpleasant to bound a very large site.</p> <p>XVI. There are cases when some pupils spend are how much work they need to do.</p>

Comments were expressed through questionnaires, letters, spoken remarks at the parents' meeting prior to the inspection and through parent governors. The overwhelming majority of parental comments were very favourable regarding the standards, quality, ethos and management of the school. Only a handful of concerns were raised. Inspectors were able to confirm these positive views, and also the need to extend the use of information technology further. Governors have been made aware of the views of parents about the need for more storage space for pupils' possessions and, whilst inspectors judged homework to be satisfactory, teachers have been made aware of the need to be specific about the expected outcomes of homework activities.

· KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The areas for further improvement listed below will enable present areas of satisfactory practice to become areas of good practice.

1. **Reduce the proportion of pupils who fail to achieve any qualifications, or who achieve less than five GCSE grades at A* to G (or equivalent), at the end of Year 11 to levels similar to those in comparable schools** by:
 - a. identifying and meeting the specific learning needs of a small group of poorly-motivated pupils; (*see paragraph 33*)
 - b. ensuring that the higher-than-average absence rates of some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are reduced; (*see paragraph 25*)
 - c. ensuring that in all subjects teaching methods and resources enable lower-ability pupils to make good progress. (*see paragraphs 32 and 33*)
2. **Monitor more consistently the progress of pupils across all the subjects that they study, particularly in Years 7 to 9** by:
 - d. linking marks, grades and comments to standardised criteria in all subjects; (*see paragraphs 53 and 54*)
 - e. making such data available to subject teachers, form tutors and pupils to support personal target-setting and individualised help. (*see paragraphs 53 and 54*)
3. **Ensure that information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively across the whole curriculum** by:
 - f. encouraging the wider use of ICT within lessons in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, geography and history; (*see paragraphs 90, 105, 113, 119, 149 and 158*)
 - g. making more intensive use of the existing ICT equipment. (*see paragraph 90*)
4. **Build on recent developments to ensure that the use made of tutorial time is consistently productive for all tutor groups** by:
 - h. setting clearer, more ambitious learning targets for these sessions; (*see paragraph 34*)
 - i. relating these targets more specifically to the curriculum for personal, social and health education, especially in Years 7 to 9; (*see paragraph 42*)
 - j. using a wider range of learning strategies and resources; (*see paragraphs 34 and 89*)
 - k. providing more specific training for tutors who teach these sessions. (*see paragraph 85*)

None of these is a continuation of a key issue for action from the previous inspection report. Each of the four issues has been identified in the current school development plan and aspects of them are already being addressed.

In addition to those above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- Improve the levels of support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs. (*see paragraphs 32, 33 and 50*)
- Construct a more detailed medium-term financial planning model. (*see paragraph 96*)

INTRODUCTION

• Characteristics of the school

1.Trinity School is a comprehensive secondary school situated in the centre of Carlisle. It is comparatively large with 1740 boys and girls, of whom nearly a quarter are in the sixth form. From 1992 until 1999 the school was grant maintained but this year it elected for voluntary aided status under the stewardship of the Church of England. This strengthens an ancient link with Carlisle Cathedral.

2.Pupils come to Trinity from a wide geographical area, including a range of surrounding villages, but over recent years the proportion of pupils who live in the city has risen. Their backgrounds encompass a wide range of social and economic circumstances. Few pupils are from ethnic minority families and nearly all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils of compulsory school age entitled to free school meals has risen from 4.8% in 1995 to over 11% in 1999 although this is still lower than the national average. About 15% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs which is about average.

3.Evidence from tests which Year 7 pupils take in their first term indicates that average levels of attainment on entry have declined steadily from being well above the national average in 1995 to being just above the national average in 1998. In 1999 the average attainment of pupils arriving in Year 7 has risen again and is above the national average.

4.Since the end of 1998 Trinity School has been designated a specialist language college and has enjoyed significant investment in state-of-the-art language teaching facilities which are increasingly being used by the whole community. The school's declared aim is "to become a centre for excellence in international education, connecting the North Cumbria learning community with Europe and the wider world."

5.Governors have agreed a detailed development plan for the school which has a focus on maintaining and extending high academic achievement as its first objective. They have set the following targets for GCSE results for the Year 2000.

- Proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C: 57%
- Proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G: 94%
- Average GCSE points score: 39.6.

6. Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	134	111	245

6. National Curriculum Test Results

		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	99	93	87
	Girls	93	73	71
	Total	192	166	158
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	78 (78)	68 (68)	64 (61)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	38 (53)	46 (43)	35 (36)
	National	28 (34)	38 (36)	23 (27)

6. Teacher Assessments

		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	79	79	89
	Girls	80	73	77
	Total	159	152	166
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	65 (60)	62 (77)	68 (52)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	62 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	31 (22)	41 (34)	34 (32)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

Attainment at Key Stage 4

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	139	155	294

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	70	127	129
	Girls	79	144	147
	Total	149	271	276
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	51 (50)	92 (90)	94 (94)
	National	46 (45)	87 (90)	93 (95)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year (i.e. 1998)

Attainment in the Sixth Form

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	84	75	159

Average A/AS points score per candidate

For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent

For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent

	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	15.9 (19.7)	19.0 (20.1)	17.4 (20.0)	2.0 (0.0)	10.0 (0.7)	4.7 (0.3)
National*	16.0	16.7	16.4	2.6	2.8	2.7

*all comprehensive schools with sixth forms nationally

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

	Number	% Success rate
School	41	71%
National		n/a

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

Authorised	School	7.8
Absence	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised	School	1.3
Absence	National comparative data	1.1

6.

6. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	63
Permanent	2

6. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	26.6
Satisfactory or better	97.4
Less than satisfactory	2.6

6. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

6. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

6. Attainment and progress

6. *Attainment on entry to the school*

1.The level of pupils' attainment on entry into Year 7 is above the national average although it declined steadily from the time of the last inspection in 1995 until 1998. Baseline tests carried out by the school, together with National Curriculum test results, confirm this. They also show that this pattern has now reversed and the attainment of pupils who entered the school in 1999 is higher than it has been in the last few years.

7. *Attainment at Key Stage 3*

2.Pupils' overall performance in national tests in English, mathematics and science taken at the end of Year 9 is well above the national average, and well above the average of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Attainment in science was well above the national average in 1999. It was above average in English and mathematics. A particular feature of the high standards in English is the strength of boys' performance. Statutory teacher assessments are made annually in other National Curriculum subjects. These show that attainment is above the national average in nearly all subjects. The only area where attainment in Year 9 is below expectations is music.

8. *Attainment at Key Stage 4*

3.Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations is in line with that for similar schools. In 1999, as in previous years, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more grades in the A* to C range at GCSE was above the national average and broadly in line with the average for similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils obtaining one or more GCSE passes in the A* to G range was well below the average for similar schools. This indicates that a higher proportion of pupils leave the school with no GCSE or equivalent qualification than might be expected. A key issue for action is to continue with strategies designed to reduce this proportion. The average GCSE points score has shown a downward trend from 1995 to 1998, whilst the national trend was rising. The 1999 average points score showed a marked increase on previous years and was broadly in line with that for similar schools. This reflects an improvement in the performance of, particularly, middle and upper-ability pupils.

Attainment in the sixth form

4.Overall attainment in the sixth form is high. The average total points score in GCSE A-level examinations has been well above the national average from 1995 to 1998 and shows an upward trend consistent with the national trend. Following an increase in the number of students taking A-level courses, there was a significant drop in the average A-level points score in 1999 to a figure in line with the national average. The school offers an increasingly large range of GNVQ courses although numbers on some are small. In 1999 41 students were completing the final year of a GNVQ course. Of these, 71% achieved the qualification whilst a further 7% are continuing with their studies. Of the seventeen students achieving an advanced level GNVQ, 28% passed with distinction which is broadly in line with the national average across all subjects.

10. *Boys' and girls' attainment*

5.There are some notable differences between the attainment of boys and girls in the school. The performance of boys in Key Stage 3 is above the national average, while the performance of girls is

close to the national average. The performance of boys in English is a particular strength and is well above the national average for boys. GCSE points scores since the last inspection show that, whilst boys' results have been above the national average, girls' results have been close to it. In 1998 the average A-level points score showed little difference between boys and girls, but in 1999 the attainment of boys fell below that of girls, with a gap of 3.1 points in average A-level points score.

11. *Attainment in subjects*

6. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is above national expectations in English, mathematics, science, design & technology, modern foreign languages, information technology, history, geography and art. Standards are in line with national expectations in drama and physical education, but below in music. In music standards are improving as a result of better planning and improved teaching. Attainment is particularly high in design & technology where, over the past three years, standards have risen dramatically. By the end of Year 11 attainment is very high in design & technology, above average in English, mathematics, history, geography and drama, and average in science, information technology, art and music. In the sixth form attainment is very high in geography and drama, where A-level results are consistently impressive. Attainment is above average in English, mathematics, science, design & technology, environmental science, economics, modern foreign languages, art and music, and close to the average in history, information technology and physical education. The majority of pupils completing GNVQ courses and the nursery nursing course successfully achieve the qualification, although the drop-out rate in some groups is relatively high.

12. *Key skills*

7. Standards of literacy are generally good. Pupils speak fluently and confidently and are attentive listeners. They read accurately and with understanding. The majority can write in a variety of suitable styles and communicate ideas effectively. Standards of numeracy are more variable. The majority of pupils have a good grasp of basic mathematical ideas and can apply them appropriately in many areas of their learning. However, several lower-attaining pupils have difficulties handling straightforward problems involving numbers and this impedes their progress in other areas of learning. Overall, pupils' abilities to use information and communication technologies are well-developed although opportunities to use them are not provided consistently across the curriculum.

13.

Progress

8. Pupils in all years generally make good progress. In Years 7 to 9 they make the best progress in English, mathematics, science, design & technology, information technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography, art and physical education. Factors which contribute to pupils making good progress are demanding but achievable tasks matched to the ability of pupils, opportunities for pupils to discuss ideas, good individual support and high levels of motivation. Boys show particular strength in their oral work in English and make especially good progress with this. In mathematics some lower-attaining pupils experience problems with basic numeracy and this impedes their progress in several subjects. Most other pupils show good gains in their mathematical learning. Until recently pupils have not generally made sufficient progress in music but recent changes have improved the position and progress in music lessons is now good.

9. In Years 10 and 11 pupils make very good progress in design & technology. They progress well in modern foreign languages, where most gains are made in French and Spanish. Speaking skills are particularly well-developed in languages. Progress is good in history and geography, with particularly good progress evident in lessons. Progress is also good in English, mathematics, information technology, art, classical studies and business studies. It is satisfactory in science and music. A small number of pupils fall behind their peers in Years 10 and 11. Some of these show signs of disaffection through increased absence from school and failure to keep up with coursework tasks. In the last two

years this has contributed to the higher-than-average proportion of pupils failing to obtain at least one GCSE (or equivalent) qualification.

10. Progress is very good in the sixth form in mathematics and geography. Students taking A-level theatre studies make good progress, particularly in the development of their practical skills. Progress is satisfactory in physical education and good in all other subjects. Most pupils taking GNVQ courses respond well to the opportunities for more self-directed study and make rapid progress in their learning.

In Year 12 key skills lessons many pupils progress well, especially in the development of their organisational and problem-solving skills. However, relatively high levels of absence at the start of the course mean that not all students make the gains that they could have done.

11. Pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress in all areas of the curriculum. In mathematics, design & technology, art, geography and information technology their progress is good due to careful planning and sensitive teaching. In English, pupils with statements of special educational needs make good progress towards achieving personal literacy targets through a programme of specialist, small-group teaching. Elsewhere, pupils on the register of special needs receive relatively little specialist support and in some areas fail to keep up with the good progress of their peers.

12. The progress of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 has improved since the last inspection, and the good progress of pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form reported on in the last inspection has been maintained. The progress of boys has improved significantly. Systems for predicting attainment, identifying under-achievement and setting performance targets are developing. There is increased use of performance data and prior attainment information to monitor progress in Years 10 to 13, although there is variation in the effectiveness of its use between tutors, subject leaders and class teachers. More work needs to be done on monitoring the progress across the curriculum of pupils in Years 7 to 9.

18. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

13. Pupils have a positive attitude to school and to learning. This makes a significant contribution to their attainment and progress. They demonstrate that they can concentrate over significant periods and they take their work seriously. Many examples of pupils successfully working collaboratively with each other were seen. These included pairs working on conversations in modern foreign languages and Year 11 pupils working in small groups to make a scale model as part of an enterprise project which involved them taking on different management roles. Pupils also make good use of opportunities to work on their own, for example in continuing art coursework outside lessons and in making use of information technology equipment at lunchtimes.

14. The previous inspection report found that standards of behaviour were generally good and this remains the case both in lessons and communal activities such as assemblies. Narrow corridors and restrictions caused by building work create some congestion when pupils are moving between lessons and, although occasionally there is some boisterous behaviour, pupils generally act sensibly. Pupils show respect for their own work and that of others, and textbooks and equipment are treated with care.

15. Behaviour in the school is underpinned by a well-developed code of conduct which combines both commendations for effort and sanctions such as detentions. Pupils know what is expected of them and the code of conduct is regularly reinforced by form tutors who monitor behaviour carefully. Parents know about and approve the school's expectations and the great majority agree that standards of behaviour are high.

16. The quality of relationships throughout the school is a particular strength. Teachers demonstrate real concern for pupils' well-being and, in return, pupils show respect for their teachers and other adults. In class pupils listen to each other's contributions and often assist each other's learning. There are several

ways in which older pupils help younger ones, for example through a 'buddy scheme' and through volunteering to provide personal help in lessons including languages and information technology.

17. The school is generally successful in providing pupils with opportunities to take responsibility and develop as individuals. This is particularly so in the sixth form where there is an active student council. Many Year 12 students successfully organise events for pupils in Years 7 to 11 as part of their key skills training. In general, though, sixth formers' contributions to the work of the new house system are still in their early stages. Pupils help with the organisation of various school events such as parents' evenings. In all years they undertake a range of voluntary work, including helping a local primary school with its drama production and fundraising for charities. A group of sixth formers has set up a popular school radio station. This has involved obtaining sponsorship and the training of younger pupils in its running to ensure continuation of the project.

18. The very wide variety of extra-curricular activities and residential visits provides further valuable opportunities to promote important aspects of personal development. An impressively large number of pupils participate successfully in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. This contains a strong community service element and contributes very positively to the development of personal attributes such as self-reliance, team-working and assuming responsibility for others.

24. Attendance

19. The overall attendance rate is broadly in line with the national average, as is the rate of unauthorised absence. There is a consistent pattern across all year groups. Attendance figures have remained constant for some years and the school has recently introduced a number of measures, including more stringent monitoring of pupils with poor attendance records and rewards for pupils with good attendance, in order to raise the profile of this issue and secure improvement. A small number of pupils have increasingly high rates of absence, particularly in Year 11, and this limits their chances of being able to sit GCSE examinations.

20. Most pupils arrive at school on time, although some experience occasional transport problems. A prompt start is made to morning and afternoon sessions.

26. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

26. Teaching

21. The overall quality of teaching is good in all curriculum areas. It is very good in design & technology in Key Stage 4 and in art, geography and modern foreign languages in the sixth form. Some outstanding examples of very effective teaching were observed in design & technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography and physical education.

22. Overall, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in over 97% of lessons seen. It was good in 41% of lessons, very good in 22% and excellent in 4%. It was unsatisfactory in less than 3% of lessons. There were no significant differences in the quality of teaching between key stages, although a higher proportion of very good and excellent lessons was observed in the sixth form. The small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons was not concentrated in any particular area of work.

23. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, notably in Key Stage 3, where 75% of lessons were at least satisfactory in 1995 compared with 96% of lessons now. This is as a result of more careful planning of activities to meet the differing needs of pupils and better feedback to pupils on how to improve their standards of work. Senior managers and subject leaders have recently observed teaching throughout the school and have plans to make such monitoring more systematic in the near

future. The school has the capacity to secure further improvement through increased use of these arrangements to identify and share the effective practice which already exists and by defining and developing the role of the advanced skills teacher.

24. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects that they teach is good and often very good. It is a particular strength in design & technology, where the teachers make use of insights gained as examiners, and in classical studies where expertise is enthusiastically communicated. In modern foreign languages teachers not only have a confident command of the languages that they teach but also a very good knowledge of the cultural background.

25. Teachers have high expectations in relation to behaviour and learning. In design & technology challenging objectives are clearly explained together with their assessment criteria. Pupils are then monitored and carefully supported to ensure that they meet these expectations. In Years 10 and 11 personal, social and moral education (PSME) lessons often demand the analysis of complex situations within which pupils have to consider the moral and ethical implications of personal decisions. There is less clarity about what able pupils should be aiming to achieve in some music and information technology lessons and about what is expected of lower-attaining pupils in some science sets.

26. Planning is good in most subjects and very good in art and design & technology. In geography and history there is exemplary planning to ensure a smooth progression from one stage to the next. In the best lessons teachers outline objectives and create a sense of direction and purpose that is appreciated by the pupils. Lessons are planned well to take account of pupils with special educational needs in mathematics, art, design & technology, geography and information technology. Elsewhere, too little use is made of individual education plans to ensure that the particular requirements of pupils with special needs are reflected in the design of their lessons.

27. Most teachers use an effective range of methods and organisational strategies with an appropriate balance of whole-class teaching and group and individual work. History teachers make judicious use of group work to support low-attaining pupils. Good questioning in English and history probes understanding and encourages pupils to extend and develop their ideas. In A-level textiles and in child care lessons, pupils take responsibility for research and for teaching their class-mates. In modern foreign languages teachers skilfully blend traditional approaches with the opportunities offered by modern technology. The techniques used by specialist learning support teachers with small groups of pupils with poor literacy skills are very effective with the great majority of pupils who have statements of special educational needs. There is scope for these approaches to be shared more widely amongst class teachers who have pupils with special needs in their lessons. There is also a need to focus more on the specific needs of a small number of less well-motivated pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, to ensure that as many as possible continue to work towards a GCSE or equivalent qualification.

28. The range of methods and organisation used to teach personal, social and health education in Years 7 to 9 varies from very good to occasionally unsatisfactory. In the best cases (particularly in Year 7) pupils are helped with such things as developing their study skills, setting targets for achievement, evaluating their own learning needs and reflecting on a thought for the day. In contrast, cases occur where pupils simply fill in basic worksheets without significant new gains in learning. In order to maximise the learning opportunities within the tutor periods there is a need to set clearer, more ambitious learning targets for these sessions that relate more specifically to nationally-recognised outcomes for personal, social and health education. In many cases there is a need to use a wider range of learning strategies and resources as happens in many PSME lessons in Years 10 and 11.

29. Standards of discipline and management of behaviour are good overall and are often very good. There is the expectation in all subjects that all pupils and students should behave sensibly and this is well-understood. Relationships are very supportive and teachers are skilled at maintaining a focused working atmosphere in their classrooms.

30. Lessons are generally energetically taught with little time lost in the transition between activities. Some satisfactory lessons could be improved by ensuring that activities are not allowed to run on for too long and by providing opportunities for pupils to review their learning at the end of the lesson. Time is used especially well in food technology, particularly in practical sessions. Preparation and management of resources are good in most classes. In English, mathematics, science, geography and history there is relatively little use of information technology to enhance learning opportunities. However, in modern foreign languages there is excellent use of language laboratories, for example to encourage pupils, particularly boys, to practise speaking confidently without the embarrassment of being overheard by their peers.

31. The overall quality of marking is good. In English very detailed marking makes clear to pupils how they have met the assessment criteria and gives helpful suggestions for improvement. The use of assessment in art is very effective, with pupils valuing on-going feedback on their work which allows them to modify techniques and improve standards. Assessment information is used well in geography, for example to create individual targets for pupils. Assessment codes are generally understood well by pupils but in some subjects, including mathematics and information technology, there are unhelpful variations and inconsistencies in the way that teachers mark pupils' work.

32. A small number of parents expressed concerns about homework. Inspectors found homework to be used appropriately in the majority of subjects. It is set regularly and often used to develop research skills and in preparation for the next lesson. In the sixth form it is used very effectively, for example to extend the range of ideas being considered in A-level art. However, there are a few sixth form students who would benefit from closer supervision of on-going coursework to ensure that they are not falling behind.

38.

38. **The curriculum and assessment**

38. *The curriculum*

38. *Key Stage 3*

33. The Key Stage 3 curriculum includes all statutory subjects within a generally well-balanced time allocation during a 25-hour taught week. This represents a very substantial improvement since the last inspection when there was insufficient coverage of four subjects. Innovations flowing from the recently-introduced language college initiative are already having a very beneficial influence in widening pupils' cultural horizons and encouraging them to use modern electronic communications technology to good effect.

34. The time allocated for English, mathematics and science is appropriate, although within that time more attention could usefully be given to building upon pupils' primary school capabilities in Year 7 and in making wider use of information and communication technology in all three years. A second modern foreign language is introduced into Year 8, although the take-up for this varies considerably between girls and boys. Currently in Year 8 87% of girls and 59% of boys take two modern foreign languages. The remainder follow a classical studies course, which for 8% of curriculum time represents a large commitment for such a subject compared to most schools. Plans are in hand to enable all pupils to study two modern foreign languages in Years 8 and 9 as part of the language college strategy.

35. Pupils develop their information technology skills well in Year 7 with the help of well-designed specialist lessons that take 4% of the taught week. Similar sessions are provided in Year 9, but not in Year 8. The intention that the skills gained in these specialist sessions in Year 7 will subsequently be reinforced and extended within most subjects has yet to be fully realised. Information technology is used very well in modern foreign languages and design & technology. In most other subjects there is

scope for pupils to make more extensive use of computers to gather, process, communicate and present information and ideas.

36. In Years 7 to 9 many aspects of personal, social and moral education (PSME) are taught within a one-hour extended form tutor period each week. Other aspects are taught within science, drama and religious education. This provision for PSME is generally adequate, but the quality and range of what is taught varies considerably between tutorial groups depending upon the capabilities and interests of tutors. The inter-linking of PSME work undertaken in different subjects is relatively tenuous and this reduces opportunities to obtain a measured progression towards clear targets for attainment.

37. In the great majority of cases homework and other independent learning activities are set and marked appropriately. There are a few cases where the expectations of the task are insufficiently defined with the consequence that some industrious pupils spend a great deal of time on an activity just to be sure that they have covered everything. Increasingly, pupils are making good use of reference and computer facilities at lunchtimes and after school for some of their homework tasks.

43. *Key Stage 4*

38. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has also been significantly upgraded since the last inspection. The length of the taught week was below the recommended minimum in 1995, but is now in line. A rational core and option system has been established and all National Curriculum requirements are now being met. The curriculum has been broadened to include GNVQ Part 1 courses in engineering and leisure and tourism, a new PSME course that includes valuable aspects of religious education and citizenship, specialised information technology training for all pupils and a NVQ course in building craft occupations that is run in conjunction with the neighbouring further education college. An activities course that includes first aid and adventure training is very popular with pupils and was seen by inspectors to motivate pupils well, including some who were not strongly engaged by the traditional curriculum subjects. Such improvements are helping to provide a range of courses that meet the needs of all pupils more precisely.

39. Homework and coursework activities are set and marked systematically in most subjects. Pupils are developing a wide range of independent learning skills as a consequence of some imaginative tasks set. Many students are making good use of study facilities within school to complete some of their coursework and homework activities.

40. The schemes of work in GCSE courses are suitably designed for middle and upper-ability pupils. However, there are some examples, such as in science, where they do not always reflect with sufficient insight the specific learning needs of pupils who are performing near to the grade G borderline or at standards that equate to grades E and F. In some subjects an entry-level Certificate of Achievement is usefully being introduced to provide a relevant qualification for those pupils who are unlikely to obtain at least a grade G result at GCSE.

41. Both the technical quality and the timing of the careers advice offered in Years 10 and 11 is good. The sequence of advice is well-designed to provide effective factual information at the points where important decisions need to be made.

47. *The post-16 curriculum*

42. There has been a determined move in recent years to make the curriculum provision in the sixth form more suitable for a broader range of students. Consequently the range of A-level subjects has been increased and five GNVQ courses and an NNEB vocational course have recently been introduced. This additional provision has encouraged an increased number of new students to stop on into the sixth form.

43. Appropriate key skills courses are provided for those Year 12 students who follow GNVQ courses in the three core skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology. All Year 12 students are expected to attend courses that develop additional key skills that involve independent learning, teamwork and problem-solving. Advice on the university application process is notably good.

An optional religious education course is provided which is reasonably popular. There are no time-tabled physical education sessions offered in the sixth form (except to those studying relevant examination courses) although students report that enthusiasts are welcome to make informal arrangements to use the physical education facilities, particularly after school.

49. *Pupils with special educational needs*

44. Pupils on the register of special educational needs have access to the full range of the curriculum. Those with statements of special educational needs are withdrawn from English lessons to work with specialist teachers on improving their basic literacy skills. This works well but requires closer collaboration between the learning support and English subject teams to ensure continuity for these pupils. In mathematics, art, design & technology, geography and information technology the curriculum is planned well to take account of pupils' special needs. Elsewhere there is scope for improving the support offered to pupils on the special needs register through greater use of individual education plans and more sharing of effective strategies.

50. *Extra-curricular opportunities*

45. The taught curriculum is imaginatively and extensively enriched by an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting, musical and dramatic activities. These opportunities are taken up by a large number of pupils. Many gain confidence and organising skills by planning and running events and charitable acts or in participating in adventure activities. Parents are particularly complimentary about the positive impact of the successful Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme in the school. The language college philosophy is beginning to have a cross-curricular impact, with developing initiatives such as "science across Europe", geographical fieldwork in Denmark, more multi-cultural art and music and a video-conferencing link with a French school. Increasingly pupils are taking up new opportunities to use library, computer and other study facilities for independent learning outside lesson times.

51. *Assessment*

46. In Years 7 to 9 most subject teams assess pupils' attainment within their subject with reasonable accuracy. Teachers are aware of pupils' test scores when they enter Year 7 and are increasingly using them as a benchmark for gauging subsequent progress. There are examples of good practice in science, information technology, modern foreign languages and design & technology where precise criteria are used to determine marks and judge levels throughout Years 7 to 9. Assessment procedures are analytical of pupils' strengths and additional learning needs in English, geography and history. In general, teachers of those subjects where there are National Curriculum level descriptions in place take good account of them when drawing conclusions about standards, although in English there is a substantial variation in the teacher assessment scores and the test scores at the end of Year 9.

47. However, methods of assessment vary considerably between subjects and there is no common standard across the school which enables pupils' performance to be reliably monitored across the whole curriculum. In some cases there is too much reliance on subjective "effort" grades that do not relate sufficiently to standards of attainment.

48. Pupils would therefore benefit from having their progress monitored more consistently across all the subjects that they study in Years 7 to 9. In many cases a valuable starting point would be to ensure that all schemes of work contain clear targets for pupils of differing abilities to reach that are linked to

national expectations for their age. This would help to ensure that summary marks and grades are related to agreed criteria for standards across all subjects. At present pupils are not always clear about what level they are working to, or what their learning targets should be apart from the additional effort that they could make. Form tutors and pupils would benefit from having access to standardised assessment data from subject teachers to enable the personal target-setting approaches that are currently used in tutorial sessions to be based on a more secure foundation. Such information could help subject teachers, form tutors and house heads to be more pro-active in providing individualised help to pupils of all abilities who are making less progress between reporting times than might be expected.

49. The assessment methods that are used in Years 10 and 11 are more closely linked to GCSE and GNVQ grades and in general pupils know their target grade and the actual standard that they are currently performing at. A database which charts the progress of each pupil across subjects is being established in Key Stage 4 for the use of tutors and heads of house. This has started in Year 10 and is due to be extended into Year 11 next year.

50. In Years 12 and 13 students have access to their target grades for the A-level and GNVQ courses that they are following. GNVQ assessment criteria are very precise and are carefully followed. Students know exactly how well they are doing and what more they have to do to succeed at the level that they are working to. A-level students are able to make realistic applications to universities based upon a secure understanding of their target grades.

56. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

56. Overview

51. Considerable thought has recently been given to ways in which the values of a Christian school should be articulated and achieved through both the curriculum and personal actions. Equally, much thought has been given to ways in which the social and cultural horizons of pupils can be widened through the language college initiative. As a consequence there are many emerging new strengths in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At the time of the last inspection the rationale for this provision was not well-documented and initiatives were not co-ordinated. To some extent this is still true, although the current practice is much richer and more purposeful than it was. In many cases practical actions have preceded their formulation within policy statements. Overall, the opportunities provided for pupils' moral, social and cultural development are good. Opportunities for their spiritual development are satisfactory and improving.

57. Spiritual development

52. There are an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to reflect upon spiritual issues and to shape their own values and beliefs. Many of these opportunities arise from the consideration of challenging themes from assemblies, evocative literary sources or video programmes. Other opportunities arise from involvement in house charities and some activities in religious education and personal, social and health education lessons. Subject schemes of work outside religious education are short of intentions and practical strategies to promote spiritual development in any organised way. There is no overall shared understanding about what spiritual development entails, although the need to increase opportunities for spiritual development is regarded as a very desirable general aim.

58. Moral development

53. Within tutorial sessions, assemblies and some subjects pupils are successfully taught how to follow rules and codes of conduct. They are also shown how to discriminate between right and wrong, including in some complex moral and ethical situations. Most pupils behave well and abide by mature moral codes within school. In some A-level courses (such as environmental science) students make

moral judgements based upon sophisticated technical and legal considerations as well as personal values.

59. *Social development*

54. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to develop their social skills and also to understand how to act as responsible citizens. These opportunities are provided particularly well in the personal, social and health education programme, drama, religious education and physical education. Pupils can also exercise personal responsibility within the unusually large variety of extra-curricular activities offered. Teaching methodologies are progressively giving more scope for pupils to become involved in managing aspects of their own learning. This is especially so in some Key Stage 4 subjects (such as design & technology, French, Spanish and GNVQ courses) and in a more resource-based learning approach in some A-level subjects (such as A-level environmental science and geography) and all GNVQ courses. Year 12 students are imaginatively involved in organising activities for pupils in Years 7 to 11 as part of their key skills programme.

60. *Cultural development*

55.Provision for pupils' cultural development is a much-improved aspect of the work of the school from the time of the last inspection, thanks particularly to the impact of the language college initiative. Pupils are increasingly accepting the benefits of having a European and global perspective. Pupils make many foreign visits and exchanges as part of their studies in several subjects including art, science, business and geography. Pupils are being made more aware of the diversity of cultures within Europe and the world, for instance through charitable events associated with the continent after which their house is named. Pupils are also being offered suitable opportunities to sample contemporary workplace and higher education learning cultures. There is still some work to be done to enable pupils to gain a fuller appreciation of the diversity of other cultures within Britain.

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

56.The arrangements for the support and guidance of pupils are good, as they were at the time of the previous inspection, and in many respects have been strengthened further.

57.The introduction of revised form tutor arrangements and the house system have provided an effective structure both for improving the monitoring of pupils' academic progress and for stronger pastoral support. Tutors already monitor pupils' efforts across the curriculum and are increasingly having access to information about academic achievement. Pupils agree personal targets after discussion with their tutors, which reflect both academic and pastoral aims. These are generally monitored well.

58.There is extensive monitoring of behaviour against the code of conduct and detentions and incident reports are all logged, with parents being involved as appropriate. A number of anti-bullying initiatives have been taken and pupils confirm that, although some incidents do take place, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Appropriate systems are in place for recording attendance and following up absences and the school receives helpful support from the education welfare services and other agencies.

59.The school provides a safe environment for pupils and steps are taken to make it as secure as possible given the extensive site. There are well-established and effective arrangements for dealing with child protection issues and several senior staff have received the requisite training in this matter. The school has sound systems for dealing with health, safety and security issues; these are monitored regularly and follow-up action taken. An independent health and safety audit has recently been commissioned and following this a number of additional measures, including revised risk assessments, are scheduled.

60.Pupils receive a range of helpful advice and support from a variety of visiting professionals, such as the school nurse and careers advisers, as well as their teachers. There are also useful links with a voluntary counselling scheme. The school works effectively with partner primary schools so that pupils are well-supported when they join the school. A comprehensive induction programme for the sixth form ensures a smooth transition for those students continuing into Year 12.

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

61.The school has further developed the strong partnership with parents that it had at the time of the last inspection. A large majority of parents are satisfied with the information received about what is being taught and about their children's progress.

62.There is a well-established structure of meetings, newsletters and reports and the school makes effective use of the local press each week as a means of communicating about school issues. Reports on pupils' progress are detailed and personalised although in some cases could contain more specific

academic targets. Homework is set regularly and monitored through homework diaries. All these measures encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's education.

63. Most parents indicate that they find the school approachable and they welcome the revised structure of form tutors and houses which means that they have a consistent contact point when there are concerns. A number of parents paid tribute to the efforts of individual tutors in resolving particular problems.

64. Parents support the school in a number of other ways. In particular their fundraising has enabled the school to purchase important resources, such as staging, from which pupils benefit directly. They have also made a major contribution towards funding the school minibus. The school is actively seeking to increase parental involvement through the re-launch of the Parents' Association as 'Friends of Trinity' and the rate of parental response to various consultation exercises, for example on the recent home-school agreement, has increased significantly in recent times.

65. The school continues to develop a number of major initiatives to strengthen its contacts with the local community and create a range of national and international links, following its establishment as a language college. Contacts with such organisations as Carlisle City Council, Enterprise Cumbria, regional institutes of higher education, local businesses and Carlisle Cathedral bring direct educational benefits to pupils, partly through the increased resources obtained through sponsorship but mainly through extending the range of opportunities available to them.

66. Well-established links with local employers result in an increased range of work experience placements. Pupils have an opportunity to write for the local press, visit building and industrial sites as part of their studies and, as the premises are used for a continuing education programme, develop an understanding that their school is part of a wider community.

72. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

72. Leadership and management

67. The school is imaginatively led and energetically managed. There is a clear view of where the school is heading which is shared by governors and staff. Careful planning and astute management have meant that the extensive range of initiatives which have been undertaken over recent months have served to inspire and unite staff rather than overwhelm them.

68. Governors exercise their functions assiduously and effectively. Many have contributed significant time, expertise and other resources for the benefit of the school over several years. In particular, they assumed major financial responsibility for the school's affairs during its grant-maintained period and this expertise is continuing to bring benefits.

69. Governors established clear priorities for the school at the time of the appointment of the headteacher two years ago and have been closely involved in shaping recent developments through a close working relationship with the head and senior management team. They hold the school to account through rigorous scrutiny but do so in a positive and supportive manner.

70. The school benefits considerably from the vision and inspiration of the headteacher. He has quickly convinced governors and staff of the way ahead and has initiated a wide range of structural and organisational reforms. He has effectively blended careful consultation with the imperative for action to ensure that changes are agreed swiftly but with the full support of those involved. He has been particularly effective in empowering colleagues to assume new responsibilities and roles. His influence has extended beyond the school and increasingly involves encouraging the wider community in sharing

the school's aspirations. In this way, the school was able to raise impressive sponsorship locally to support its specialist language college bid in 1998.

71. The deputy headteachers, along with the bursar and the heads of main school and sixth form, share responsibilities for strategic planning as well as operational control for areas of school life. These functions are exercised with thoughtful care and diligence. Together with the headteacher, they form a strong leadership team which has served very effectively to shape the vision for the future. The deputy headteachers have, in particular, ensured that ambitions, whilst challenging, are realisable. Within the revised structure, this senior team works alongside five heads of house and five curriculum managers to form a steering group which assumes responsibility for implementing and monitoring policy across the whole school. This structure is working well to ensure that initiatives are understood amongst all staff and are implemented consistently.

72. Subject leaders manage the affairs of their departmental teams competently and efficiently. They accept and exercise responsibility for standards of achievement, the deployment of resources and development planning. These were areas identified in the last report as needing attention, and it is clear that they have been the subject of effective improvement. Furthermore, subject leaders have begun to work with curriculum managers to monitor the quality of teaching through a programme of joint observations. This is helping to share examples of effective practice within departments.

73. Heads of house and the heads of Years 12 and 13 all work closely with form tutors. They have provided very effective support for tutors in the expansion of their roles. This has involved increased responsibility for target-setting, academic monitoring and teaching aspects of personal, social and health education. Together with tutors, they have been responsible for managing the implementation of the new pastoral structures which have been warmly welcomed by parents.

74. An extensive, detailed development plan has been produced which contains a broad range of appropriate objectives all linking to the core task of improving pupil achievement. There is also a separate, detailed plan for the introduction and development of the language college. Each plan indicates who has lead responsibilities for specific objectives together with estimates of financial and time costs. However, the school development plan would benefit from more sharply-defined performance indicators to support monitoring and evaluation. Departmental development plans link very clearly to whole-school objectives and provide further demonstration of the unity of purpose across the school.

75. Since 1995 the school has made improvements to all those areas identified as key issues in the last report. In each case progress has been at least satisfactory and has been particularly impressive in making the quality of teaching consistently good. Pupils are benefiting from changes across a broad range of other fronts. The energy and commitment of governors and staff which have secured these rapid improvements, particularly over recent months, provide clear evidence of the capacity for further improvement. Staff at all levels exhibit strong determination to help pupils achieve higher standards. An effective management structure is in place to oversee continuing developments and to ensure that new systems are bedded in efficiently. Increasingly, managers accept responsibility for evaluating the impact of changes on the quality of teaching and learning. Over the coming months it is going to be particularly important to ensure that robust systems are in place for identifying strengths and weaknesses across the school and for helping staff to maintain a shared view about what further developments are needed.

76. All statutory obligations are met. Shortcomings in the curriculum and in the monitoring of attendance, which were noted in 1995, have all been corrected.

82. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

82. *Staffing*

77.The teaching staff are well-qualified and have an appropriate range of experience to teach the full curriculum provided. There is a very good match of specialist teachers to subject areas throughout. There is also a good balance between the proportion of teachers who have taught in the school for some time, contributing experience and continuity, and more recent arrivals, bringing new ideas and different perspectives. Where learning support staff are deployed to work alongside class teachers, they do so effectively. However, the concentration of learning support teachers' time in working with small extraction groups means that weaker pupils, who would benefit from extra support in lessons, sometimes struggle without it.

78.An appropriate range of well-qualified support staff is employed. Their roles and management structures are clear. Their hard work and commitment make a significant contribution to the smooth running of all aspects of the school's work. In particular, they contribute to the efficiency of the school by helping to ensure that teachers are able to focus their time and energies on their core tasks of teaching and managing.

79.Arrangements for the professional development of staff are satisfactory, although the budget for this is now more limited than in recent years. There are variations in the provision across subjects and, whereas much recent effort has gone into raising the information technology skills of modern foreign languages teachers, in other subjects, such as geography, training in this has been limited. Support staff are included in the training programme, which is generally linked well to school and departmental development plans. A central record of courses attended is maintained, although in some departments no detailed training records are kept. To help overcome the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching within tutorial sessions, further specific training for tutors should be given and best practice should be shared more readily.

80.Formal arrangements for teacher appraisal are currently in abeyance pending the introduction of new Government proposals in 2000 but a scheme for monitoring teaching has been introduced and plans are in hand to build on this in the near future. The school's involvement in the Investors in People award scheme ensures that the training needs of non-teaching staff are kept under review. A suitable programme is in place for staff induction and the support of newly-qualified teachers. These are enhanced by the strong links between the school and a local teacher training institution.

86. *Accommodation*

81.The school site is a difficult one to manage, with a number of buildings of different ages spread out along an extended site. Further building work is in progress. Overall the accommodation is adequate for the effective delivery of the curriculum. Most subjects have a dedicated suite of rooms and some subject areas have benefited greatly from a refurbishment and improvement programme. For example, there are now excellent facilities for food technology and a modern and well-equipped language centre. However, there are also areas where provision is less good. The main school library is too small for a school of this size and is a constraint on plans to extend independent learning opportunities. Some overcrowding still occurs when classrooms are used by larger groups, particularly in the sixth form centre, and there are no practice rooms for small-group work in music. Some of the physical education changing rooms are in very poor condition, as are a number of mobile classrooms still in use.

82.A modern sports hall and a small swimming pool are both used intensively. Pupils also enjoy the benefits of deceptively extensive outdoor playing fields and recreational facilities, including a riverbank designated a site of special scientific interest.

88. *Resources for learning*

83.The overall availability of learning resources is satisfactory. Although some of the shortcomings in provision identified at the time of the last inspection, particularly in information technology, have been addressed, the pattern across subjects is still variable. Some lower-attaining pupils would benefit from more resources specifically targeted at supporting their particular needs, for example the use of structural apparatus in mathematics. The range of resources used to enliven PSME lessons in Years 10 and 11 is not replicated in Years 7 to 9 where there is sometimes a heavy reliance on worksheets which fail to motivate pupils sufficiently.

84.In several areas, lack of access to computer equipment limits learning opportunities. For example, there have been improvements in access to information technology equipment in science but there is still a shortfall in English and mathematics. The best provision is in modern foreign languages where pupils benefit greatly from the recently-completed language centre. The location of computers needs to be audited since there is evidence of some being housed in areas where they are not used. Similarly, the use of the computer suites needs to be monitored to ensure that classes timetabled to use them are those most able to make efficient use of the equipment. During the inspection the school was informed of its funding entitlement under the National Grid for Learning initiative for 2000/2001. Plans are already being put together to use this money to enhance the school's information and communication technology resources still further.

85.Most subjects now have adequate sets of textbooks. These are complemented by the well-stocked and expertly-managed school libraries. There are also extensive careers libraries in the main school and in the sixth form which are used well to support pupils' consideration of career options.

91. **The efficiency of the school**

86.The school makes good use of the resources available and its financial affairs are monitored very closely. Recent changes to the use of the site have enabled the school to ensure that pupils feel more secure whilst enjoying the benefits of extensive facilities. Staff are valued highly and recent changes to management structures have improved the efficiency of their deployment. In particular, support staff, technicians and administrative staff all make major contributions to the efficient working of the school. Resources for learning are generally used well, although there is scope to improve the usage rates of some computers. The positive impact of the new technologies within the language college is already very evident amongst pupils in foreign languages lessons.

87.The school has been particularly effective in securing additional resources for the benefit of pupils. All pupils enjoy a swimming programme at no net cost, through hiring out of the school pool; students can take advantage of an increasingly extensive continuing education programme based in the sixth form centre; the hire of car-parking spaces to city visitors raises several thousands of pounds annually and governors are exploring the possibility of offering payroll services to other schools. Most significantly, the school has raised over £100,000 in partnership funding to establish the language college.

88.The governing body has developed expertise in overseeing all the financial affairs of the school during its grant-maintained period. Annual budgets which reflect the needs of the school development plan are agreed with senior managers. Management information systems are now used well by the bursar, senior management team and governors to share information and monitor spending. Trends in spending are tracked closely to identify unexpected changes and use is made of data to compare spending patterns with similar schools. Appropriate steps are taken to secure best value in purchasing supplies and services. Auditors' reports are used constructively and confirm that financial systems are functioning properly.

89.Improvements in the way that money is devolved to subject teams have been introduced and there is now a better match between funding and departmental need. Budgets for day-to-day running costs are based on a formula reflecting the number of students taking each subject. A separate sum of money is

identified to fund particular developments, and subject leaders are invited to bid for this annually. Subject leaders are now fully aware of their financial responsibilities and are required to account for their budgets in detail.

90. The whole-school budget anticipates an excess of expenditure over income of about £60,000 for the current year. This is to be met from existing reserves and is a conscious decision by governors to ease the transition from grant-maintained to voluntary-aided status. However, the longer term financial plan does not explain how this will be accommodated in the future. The prospect of continued reduced income in future years, alongside the intention to expand the curriculum further, particularly in the sixth form, needs to be reconciled in a more detailed medium-term financial plan for the school which will allow the effects of establishing major spending priorities to be examined.

91. Taking account of the resources available, the quality of education provided, the high standards achieved, particularly in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and the recent rapid rate of improvement, the school continues to provide good value for money.

97. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

97. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

97. English

92. The high standards in English reported in the last inspection have been maintained in all years.

93. Pupils' attainment in English at the end of Year 9 is above national standards. Results in the National Curriculum test results in recent years have been well above both the national average and the average performance of schools with similar intakes. Most pupils write effectively in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes and audiences. Writing is usually carefully structured and standards of accuracy and presentation are high. Narrative and descriptive writing, in which pupils make imaginative vocabulary choices and use imagery effectively, is particularly strong. By the end of Year 9 pupils are also writing effectively in more formal, discursive styles. Most pupils read fluently, accurately and with understanding. In Years 8 and 9 in particular there is evidence of engaged responses to challenging texts using appropriate critical vocabulary. In discussion pupils generally speak confidently, listen attentively and are prepared to ask questions. Their command of standard English is secure.

94. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is above the national average for both English and English literature although, until 1999, a higher-than-average number of pupils had not been entered for the examinations. Boys and girls attain equally well. This is unusual given the national picture of boys' lower achievement in English. Lesson observations confirm that responses to English literature are a particularly strong feature of work in Years 10 and 11. Few students, however, use information and communication technology to support their work in English.

95. The 1995 inspection report commented on improved standards in the sixth form. These improvements have been maintained during a period of rapid expansion. English is now one of the highest recruiting A-level subjects, and results for English A-level courses are in line with the national average.

96. Communication skills are also well-developed in other subjects. Most pupils speak lucidly in discussion and when making presentations, for example in design & technology. They generally read with reasonable fluency, accuracy and understanding when the text chosen is appropriate, and they can successfully extract information from texts in geography and history as well as in English. Able and

middle-ability pupils write accurately and effectively in most subjects. The standard of writing of lower-attaining pupils is more varied and some teachers are more successful in helping them to reach high standards of literacy than others. While literacy is generally well-developed and well-supported in Years 12 and 13, there is evidence that some GNVQ students would benefit from more effective support in developing more advanced literacy skills.

97. Pupils' progress in lessons is often good or very good, and is seldom less than satisfactory. Low-attaining pupils sometimes make good progress in their work, especially when skilful teaching helps them to meet a challenge, for example in their responses to fiction and poetry. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive high-quality specialist support through withdrawal lessons. These help them make good progress with basic literacy skills. However, other pupils with special needs often do not have access to additional support and occasionally the progress of middle and lower-attaining pupils is impeded because they are not sufficiently clear about what is required of them.

98. Attitudes to work and behaviour are usually good or very good. The vast majority of pupils concentrate well and many classes display high levels of commitment and enthusiasm. They work well together when given the opportunity and usually treat each other, and their teachers, with respect.

99. The teaching of English is good and often very good. It is rarely less than satisfactory. Lessons are generally characterised by good subject knowledge, effective planning and high expectations with regard both to pupils' behaviour and their learning. Some good examples of skilful questioning and differentiated teaching occur, although there is still scope to make these characteristics a common feature of all lessons. In general, too little use is made of information technology to support the development of pupils' literacy skills. The absence of an agreed scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 limits the quality of teachers' planning and sometimes inhibits smooth progression in learning.

105. *Drama*

100. Drama is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9, as a subject option in Years 10 and 11 and as theatre studies at A-level. In Year 7 pupils have a weekly drama period which is replaced by two short blocks of time in each of Years 8 and 9. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Some drama sessions, particularly in the early years, make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Examples include the exploration of bullying or prejudice and the development of negotiating skills. At the end of Year 11 GCSE examination results in 1999 were well above the national average and were a further improvement on those of previous years. The standards being attained in the current Year 11 classes indicate that this improving trend is likely to be maintained. In A-level theatre studies students' results compare favourably with their results in other subjects and with the national picture. A particular strength is the high proportion of A and B grades that are regularly achieved each year. Practical skills are well-developed and students are encouraged to adopt a professional approach to their work. Written work is more variable but includes some elements produced to very high standards.

101. Pupils show a keen interest in their studies, especially in Years 10 to 13, and take their work very seriously. The strong focus on group work encourages pupils to relate very positively to each other and to share ideas and value the contributions of others.

102. Drama is well-managed. The teaching of drama is generally good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in Years 12 and 13. Teachers successfully combine a strong subject knowledge with high expectations and an effective range of teaching strategies. Extra-curricular provision is extensive with a weekly lunchtime drama club, regular productions and a full programme of theatre visits.

108. **Mathematics**

103. Standards of achievement at Key Stage 3 and A-level have remained consistent and just above national averages over recent years. GCSE performance has, however, been more variable, and slipped below national norms in 1997 and 1998.

104. In 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving at the highest levels at Key Stage 3 put the school well above similar schools nationally. There are no significant differences in the performances of boys and girls in Years 7 to 9. A number of recent initiatives undertaken by the subject team have resulted in a sharp improvement in GCSE results in 1999, when 47% of all pupils achieved a higher-grade certificate. This is just above the national average. Boys made a significantly higher contribution to this performance than girls and a relatively high proportion of pupils were not entered for the examination. The subject team is now actively and effectively addressing these issues by monitoring pupil performance closely, establishing a more comprehensive mentoring system and providing lower-attaining pupils with more suitable courses. Recent changes to the structure of the curriculum should help to ensure an improving trend in standards of achievement by the end of both Years 9 and 11. Standards in A-level mathematics and further mathematics have been maintained at a high level, above the national average, despite entering a much higher proportion of the cohort than is the case nationally.

105. Most top and middle-ability pupils in Years 7 to 11 have a secure command of the subject, possess good number, shape and space and data-handling skills and can apply these capably in a variety of contexts. Many pupils also display good algebraic manipulation skills although the ability to apply these to solve problems is sometimes limited. Some lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 11 have real problems with basic numeracy and would benefit from more opportunities for practical experiences. Valuable opportunities for pupils to gain and apply numeracy skills in context are to be found particularly in science, design & technology, geography and information technology. These opportunities include chances to use calculators productively, represent and analyse data and use spreadsheets and graphs. Most pupils show an ability to overcome problems and build constructively on their earlier work. Apart from some girls in Years 10 and 11, pupils across the full ability range, including those with special needs, are well-supported and make good progress in the subject. All sixth form students make good progress.

106. The vast majority of pupils in every year are attentive and anxious to succeed. They are mostly well-behaved and keen to succeed in a subject that they acknowledge to be important. When given the opportunity they show a willingness to contribute to class discussions and work collaboratively or individually as required. However, the extent to which pupils take a pride in their work varies and poor presentation sometimes undermines the potential achievements of pupils. The skills of independent study are usefully developed as pupils move from Year 7 to Year 11 and become clearly evident in Years 12 and 13.

107. The vast majority of teaching is either satisfactory or good. Some is very good. Staff are well-qualified and provide pupils with energetic, enthusiastic and good-humoured support. Planning is thorough but often not inspired. Subject teachers need to explore the use of a wider range of materials and methods to enrich pupils' learning experiences. The use of information and communications technology is low and reflects problems in organising lessons in the specialist information technology rooms that are at some distance from the mathematics area. Coherent and full records are kept on the regular end-of-topic assessments of pupils and these provide staff with a potentially valuable overview of attainment and progress. However, the quality of day-to-day marking varies too much. Where it is good, pupils respond positively to helpful comments and also present their work coherently. Where books are monitored superficially, they contain untidy work with uncorrected mistakes that undermine standards of achievement. The current grading system is not understood well by pupils and is interpreted differently by staff. These assessment and marking issues need to be addressed by the subject team as a priority.

108. The subject team has been taken securely forward since the last inspection and staff work together

in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The development priorities that they have identified are appropriate and include taking more systematic steps to support the professional development of staff, more effective dissemination of the good practice that currently exists and supplementing the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 with better enrichment material and investigative approaches.

114. Science

109. At the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment in science were in line with national expectations. Since then, standards have risen at an impressive rate in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 12 and 13, but remain at similar levels in Years 10 and 11.

110. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment, as measured by the 1999 National Curriculum tests, is above the national average. Overall, attainment in science in Years 7 to 9 is higher than in similar schools nationally. Most pupils have a good grasp of scientific concepts and can, for example, calculate the speed of cars using measurements of distance and time. Pupils are able to carry out practical tasks accurately to gain reliable results. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

111. By the end of Year 11 pupils' attainment is close to national averages. In 1999 GCSE results were in line with those for similar schools. The proportion of boys gaining a grade within the A* to C range was slightly higher than that of girls in both 1998 and 1999. Most pupils have a sound grasp of scientific principles. Pupils in Year 11, for example, show a good understanding of the causes of variation in organisms and the function of genes. Pupils can carry out practical investigations successfully and come to appropriate conclusions. A significant number of pupils were not entered for science GCSE in recent years. A recently introduced Certificate of Achievement course is now improving access to the curriculum and motivation for the least able pupils in Years 10 and 11.

112. In Years 12 and 13 the vast majority of science students successfully gain passes in A-level physics, chemistry and biology. There has been a significant rise in the proportion of students gaining higher grades in A-level chemistry over the last five years. The average points score for the three subjects taken together shows a small increase from 1998 to 1999 and is above the national average. Observation of lessons shows high levels of attainment in chemistry and physics but less consistently high levels in biology.

113. In all years pupils generally make good progress, demonstrating significant annual gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. The use of target-setting and review sheets motivates pupils and improves progress by informing them of the next steps in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but the low levels of support for them in lessons means that they sometimes fail to keep up with others in the group. Whilst most pupils use language effectively in science, the progress of some lower-ability pupils is constrained by difficulties in using technical language appropriately and in expressing relationships between variables correctly. Most pupils are developing suitable numeracy skills to support their science learning well. Information technology skills are less developed well, and this represents a priority for improvement for the subject team.

114. Throughout all years most pupils are well-motivated, show interest in their science work and concentrate well on tasks for sustained periods. Relationships are good, both between pupils and also between pupils and their teachers. Pupils work collaboratively on practical activities to share ideas, tasks and resources and act responsibly when required to study independently of the teacher. On a few occasions, a small minority of pupils exhibit poor concentration in some lessons.

115. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In each year it is at least satisfactory and often very good. Teachers demonstrate secure subject expertise and have high expectations of their pupils. Lessons are planned and prepared well and the methods employed are generally appropriate to pupils' age and abilities. Resources are used effectively and the pace of lessons is appropriate. Marking is both regular

and constructive and assessments are used creatively to influence curriculum planning. Homework is used effectively to reinforce and extend learning. Although most teachers manage pupils well and achieve good standards of discipline, occasionally there is unnecessary chatter and poor concentration amongst some pupils in some lessons. The best lessons have very clear objectives and these, together with the planned structure of the lesson, are helpfully shared with the pupils. A development priority for the department is the sharing of effective teaching practice towards improving the consistency of teaching quality.

116. The science team has begun to address many of the issues identified as weaknesses at the time of the last inspection. These include improvements in the provision for more able pupils and improved assessment procedures. The science curriculum is significantly enriched by a wide range of associated extra-curricular activities. Participation in the '*Science across Europe*' project is having a positive impact on pupils' cultural development.

122. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

122. Art

117. Since the last inspection the standard reached by pupils at the end of Year 9 has risen considerably and is now above average. High standards of attainment have been maintained at A-level, but GCSE results have dipped a little to be in line with the national average.

118. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is now above the national average. Pupils successfully use a range of techniques, methods and processes to express their ideas creatively. They use a range of media, painting, drawing, printing, modelling in clay or constructing with recycled materials with considerable competence. For example, in Year 7 pupils produce ingeniously designed matchbox models or create ceramic eggs that are carefully made and well-constructed. They can illustrate their observations of natural forms, such as fir cones, with accuracy and confidence. Most pupils have a good knowledge of tone to create realistic shape and form. They have a developing sense of how the work of other artists can impact upon and influence their ideas and designs. Pupils in Year 9 are being given more opportunity to develop their experimental work and visualise their ideas in sketchbooks and elsewhere. This is good and should continue. The work is of a high quality and builds much more effectively upon pupils' prior learning than previously reported. It also provides a good basis for the start of art studies in Year 10.

119. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is now in line with the national average. Although the percentage of GCSE A* to C grades in the most recent examination fell to just below this level, the percentage of the top grades (A* and A) have remained well above average. Pupils in Year 10 are beginning to explore ways of developing their response to the work of other artists and cultures. The work is robust and made with confidence and demonstrates higher levels of achievement. However, for some pupils in Year 11, much of the work is sound, safe and in some cases a little prescriptive. Their work remains mostly unremarkable and very much in line with average expectations. Some sketchbook work and preparatory studies are exceptional, but for many these aspects remain generally less well-developed than they could be. The subject team should now encourage pupils to take many more creative risks and develop a greater confidence to be more experimental and adventurous with their ideas and preparatory studies.

120. Attainment by the end of Year 13 is above the national average and has remained so since the last inspection. Students are confident, creative artists who produce well-executed studies and some very good preparatory work, particularly at GNVQ level. Despite a drop in the most recent examination results at A-level, the numbers of students achieving the highest grades has remained consistently well above the national average.

121. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress from Years 7 to 11, particularly in Year 10. They make very good progress in Years 12 and 13. Rapid gains are now seen in Year 7 where the lack of progress was an issue for action from the last inspection. Pupils enjoy increasing opportunities to work independently and to express their ideas in art. They respond very well to their teachers and are very well-behaved. Older pupils exhibit an excellent attitude towards their studies.

122. The quality of teaching remains good and sometimes very good from Years 7 to 11 and is always very good in Years 12 and 13. Lessons are well-timed, well-organised and effective. Planning is detailed, preparation is good and on-going assessment as work develops is well-focused. Teacher demonstrations that explain processes and techniques are well-rehearsed and interesting and clearly guide pupils on how they can apply these to their art. Expectations are high with teachers ensuring that pupils develop the confidence to work independently. Consequently relationships in lessons are always good. The subject continues to be led well and has a clear educational direction that is appropriately

focused upon raising standards and levels of attainment in all years.

128. Business studies and economics

123. At the time of the last inspection most pupils achieved satisfactory results in their business studies courses. Since then standards of attainment have risen and overall they are now above average.

124. Business studies is a popular option offering a wide range of courses in Years 10 to 13. These courses include GCSE and GCE A-level business studies, A-level economics and GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses in business and leisure and tourism. In Years 10 and 11 a Part 1 GNVQ option is also provided, as are text-editing courses. The overall attainment of pupils in all of these courses is generally above national and school averages. However, whilst girls reach higher-than-national levels of attainment in GCSE business studies, boys' performance is below the national average. In Years 12 and 13 the attainment in GCE A-level business studies has been above national averages, although the proportion obtaining higher grades has reduced recently. The GCE A-level economics course is proving to be less popular in recent years than previously and there has been some decline in the pass rate, which is now a little below the national figure. The advanced GNVQ course in business studies has been successful and has had a high completion rate over the past few years. In 1999 an impressive 75% of students on this course obtained merit grades and 50% went on to higher education. The outcomes of intermediate courses are satisfactory with most students progressing to further study or to employment.

125. In all courses most pupils make good progress. Some excellent coursework is produced, often based on considerable research activity using the internet, surveys and interviews with outside organisations. Teachers are developing improved methods of supporting students in learning to work independently and ensuring that deadlines are met. Progress is being monitored more tightly but there is a need to continue to improve some pupils' management of coursework. Sometimes progress could be accelerated in some GCE A-level sessions where there are lengthy teacher expositions. In such circumstances there is scope to challenge able students more whilst offering lower-attaining students more support in consolidating key concepts.

126. Students make good use of information technology, which is closely integrated into all courses, both within lessons and at home. However, opportunities to use computers outside lesson times within the taught day are relatively constrained as the specialist business studies rooms are heavily used for teaching and there are only limited information technology resources in the library.

127. Students are positive about their learning, work co-operatively and are often very enthusiastic about their chosen courses. The practical nature of many of the courses and the range of activities undertaken prove to be very motivating. Student attitudes, behaviour and willingness to co-operate are generally very positive.

128. Teaching is generally satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. Strengths far outweigh weaknesses although there is scope for further improvement. The syllabus coverage is well-planned, and varied learning activities are evident in many lessons in each of Years 10 to 13. In the best lessons the pace of learning is rapid because pupils are working in a structured way towards ambitious objectives which they fully understand. In some GNVQ lessons where individuals are working separately, the overall pace can be sometimes be slow even though some students are working intensively. Some students in business studies courses in Years 12 and 13 would benefit from a more structured approach to learning, and sometimes specialised support in developing their key skills, especially communications skills. Successful features in some lessons include the effective use of co-operative group work, the integrated use of information and communications technology and the use of student presentations. In weaker lessons (which are in the minority) the pace of learning is reduced by objectives that lack clarity and by an over-reliance on a limited range of teaching strategies that leave pupils passive for too long. Assessment in business studies courses is generally accurate and used to good effect.

129. Increasingly effective use is made of student enrolment, attainment and destinations data. Given the variation in choices made between courses and the number who leave such courses before completion, this analysis of data should continue to be developed. Appropriate strategies to continue to improve initial guidance and to support students who are having difficulties could then be devised. Good working relationships are evident between staff and students and contribute to the maintenance of an industrious learning environment.

135. Design and technology

130. Since the last inspection significant improvements have occurred in design & technology, and standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 are now well above the national average.

131. The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 are very high. The proportion of pupils reaching level 5 is well above the national average. All pupils follow carefully-planned courses in food, control systems, resistant materials (wood, metal, plastics) and textiles and successfully develop their skills through designing and making increasingly more complex products and finishing them to progressively higher standards.

132. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils choose from a wide range of specialist areas. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 are very good with results that are well above the national average in all areas of the subject. In 1999 the overall percentage of pupils achieving a higher grade (A* to C) in design & technology was 70%. This is well above the standards that pupils achieve in many of the other subjects that they study. There are substantial strengths in the organisation of design folders and the high level of skill displayed by many pupils in the manufacturing of their products. Since the last inspection design & technology courses have been offered to all pupils and standards have shown a marked rise. In all years pupils with learning difficulties are well motivated and achieve standards above their expectations. At GCSE level those with the highest ability have the opportunity to demonstrate their potential and many produce work of a very high standard.

133. The standards attained by the small number of pupils taking A-level design & technology and A-level home, family and society in Years 12 and 13 are broadly in line with expectations. The A-level textiles course has only recently been introduced into the school but the level of understanding shown by students is already high.

134. There is very careful planning in both key stages to ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Pupils' level of knowledge, skills and understanding are constantly showing development in all aspects of design & technology. Most lessons start with a clearly-defined aim and good teaching ensures that the majority of pupils achieve this target.

135. There is a very strong ethos for learning throughout the subject. Pupils engage themselves well in their work, which is well-paced and involves a helpful variety of activities. The standards of pupils' behaviour and the quality of relationships are both very high.

136. The quality of teaching throughout design & technology is good and frequently very good. This continues to be a major strength. Teachers plan together to design work that has increasing levels of challenge. Lesson plans are supported well by pupil project books and worksheets. The clear and well-staged demonstrations of techniques given to classes are of an excellent standard. Assessment procedures are carefully integrated into projects and targets for attainment are shared with pupils at appropriate times within their project work. Interim assessments, using both internal criteria and National Curriculum statements of attainment, allow close monitoring of progress and are a strong motivating feature of the work. Lessons are focused and organised very well. Teachers show very high levels of subject knowledge and consistently high standards of expectation.

137.The quality of teaching is significantly enhanced by the experienced and enthusiastic team of design & technology teachers who are led and managed very well. The last inspection reported that there were two areas for development. The first was the accessibility of the language used in pupils' workbooks. This has been acted upon. The second was the insufficient use of computers to support and extend the designing-and-making processes. Some progress on this has been achieved but there are still shortcomings in the amount of software and computer-aided manufacturing equipment available to support learning within the resistant materials and textiles courses.

143. **Geography**

138.The high standards of attainment in geography reported in the last inspection have been maintained, with further improvements in Years 7 to 9. GCSE results have risen, with a peak in 1997. A-level results have improved, especially with respect to overall pass rates.

139.By the end of Year 9 the attainment of pupils in geography is now above national expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils confidently use Ordnance Survey maps and atlases, have good knowledge of places within the developed and developing world, and the majority are able to explain physical and human processes in geography. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is high and is often well above that expected nationally. GCSE results are above the national average for pupils of this age, and have consistently been so since the last inspection. GCSE results were particularly high in 1997, due to a larger percentage of boys attaining grades A* to C than has been the case since. In 1999 significantly more girls than boys achieved higher grades. Attainment in the sixth form is consistently high. A-level results are well above the national average for both the percentage of students attaining A to E and A to C grades.

140.Progress is good from Years 7 to 11. Progress in Years 12 and 13 is very good. Valuable opportunities for group-work, judicious use of resources and high-quality teaching contribute to pupils of all abilities making good progress. Differentiated teaching and homework strategies are well-used by most geography teachers and are very effective in helping pupils make good progress. The progress of higher-attaining pupils is facilitated by the use of some notably challenging activities.

141.Attitudes to learning are very good and pupils develop genuine enthusiasm for the subject. They always show high levels of interest in their work and particularly enjoy collaborative tasks such as group work and field study activities. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive and based on mutual respect. Behaviour is always of a high standard in geography lessons.

142.Geography teachers have secure subject knowledge, plan thoroughly and assess work effectively. In Years 7 to 11 the quality of teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. In the best lessons tasks are differentiated, the work varied and challenging and pupils are required to discuss ideas both within groups and as a whole class. Less effective lessons do not extend more able pupils as fully as possible and are planned around learning objectives that are too generalised. Skilful and effective teaching takes place with low-attaining sets in Years 10 and 11. In Years 12 and 13 teaching is always very good and is often excellent. Pupils are presented with a stimulating range of resource materials and are faced with very challenging activities. A well-planned range of homework tasks is set regularly and these help extend understanding and interest in the subject.

143.The subject team is led and managed effectively, although the use and interpretation of performance data and the use of information and communication technology needs to be developed further. Existing computer resources are poorly deployed and unsatisfactory use is made of them. Action needs to be taken to address the significant gap that exists between the attainment of boys and girls by the end of Year 11. Accommodation is good and this contributes to an excellent ethos and atmosphere in the department.

Environmental science (A-level course)

144. This is a relatively new A-level course which has attracted small numbers of A-level students. In 1999 three students sat the A-level examination and all attained good grades. Standards of attainment in environmental science lessons are satisfactory and students consistently make good progress. This is due to well-structured lessons, good use of a range of learning materials and lessons that are taught well. The A-level course is planned and taught carefully by three suitably qualified and experienced teachers.

150. History

145. High standards of attainment in history have been maintained since the time of the last inspection. Results are above expectations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in line with expectations at A-level.

146. In 1999 and in previous years the results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above national averages in terms of the percentages attaining the nationally expected standards for their age. Attainment at the end of Year 9 as demonstrated in books and lessons is good. For example, pupils show good knowledge and understanding of the issues, events and leaders of the Civil Rights movement in America.

147. At the time of the last inspection GCSE results were above national averages and since then until 1998 they have been substantially above. The 1999 results were above national figures with 64% of pupils attaining higher grades A* to C. For the first time, proportionally more boys than girls gained these higher grades. Current attainment in GCSE classes is at least in line with national expectations and sometimes much higher. Pupils demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of Mormon settlers in the American West and, more generally, can suggest ways to improve examination answers.

148. Results at A-level have varied over the years with no discernible trend. In 1999 pass rates were below national figures but the proportion of passes at the two highest grades was well above. Students did better in history than in their other subjects. Year 13 students demonstrate sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Annales School of History.

149. Progress is good in Years 7 to 9 where pupils show increased factual knowledge of the people, events and periods studied. Progress in writing at length is especially good and is supported well by the use of organising matrices. Pupils' capacity to hold an overview of a period and analyse reasons for change over time are developed less well. Most pupils make good progress in examination classes in Years 10 to 13 where teachers have high expectations and pupils are required to think hard about how to apply their knowledge. The progress of low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is sound and sometimes good due to extra support, judicious use of group-work and appropriately modified resources.

150. Overall pupils' responses in lessons are positive. Most pupils show interest, are keen to learn and are willing to ask and answer questions. Teachers enhance pupils' confidence and channel their enthusiasm appropriately. Pupils work collaboratively when required but become more independent in their learning as they move through the school. Behaviour is always good.

151. The overall quality of teaching in history is good and is very good or excellent in a quarter of lessons. It is never less than satisfactory. The department is staffed by specialist historians who have a good knowledge and understanding both of their subject and the needs of their pupils. A shared ethos, good communications and recent monitoring result in a consistency of approach. Where teaching is good, teachers have high expectations of all pupils, plan each lesson carefully, taking into account pupils' prior learning, and plan to extend this with clearly-targeted and effective strategies. Other features of these lessons are very good relationships, a genuine interest in the pupils, a real sense of

enthusiasm for history and an insistence on rigour. Pupils in Years 10 to 13 are trained well for examinations. Marking is good in praising attainment and, in assessment exercises, teachers set clear targets for improvement. In Key Stage 3 some of the most able pupils would benefit from being told how to improve their standard of work from level 6 to level 7.

152.Many strengths described in the last inspection report have been sustained and continue to contribute to the department's success. The team is admirably led. Documentation is good and the development plan suitably focused. Procedures for assessment work well at all stages. Visits are used effectively to enhance class work. However, textbook resources for aspects of the GCSE course are inadequate in their quantity and range and problems of access to computers constrain developments in the use of information technology.

158. **Information technology**

153.Considerable improvements have been made since the time of the last inspection in the overall standards of competency of all pupils in information technology. New opportunities have recently been created to enrich learning through the wider use of information and communication technology. However, opportunities for pupils' information technology competencies to be used and extended are still limited in several subject areas.

154.By the end of Year 9 teacher assessments indicate that most pupils are working at levels above national expectations. Pupils demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding in all areas of information technology, with very good examples of communicating information using a variety of data and data sources. There is a noticeable fluency in the use of the internet and e-mail.

155.At Key Stage 4 all pupils pursue the GCSE short course and have opportunities in a variety of contexts in which to apply information technology and develop it as a key skill. Attainment is in line with national expectations and further improvement will require encouraging more individual and original responses to course work rather than predictable approaches to meeting specific criteria.

156.In the sixth form pupils are offered both GNVQ courses including information technology at advanced and intermediate levels and GCE A-level computing. All GNVQ students develop key skills in information technology and sixth formers in particular are responsible for the school's rapidly evolving web site. Attainment at GNVQ is in line with expected standards and A-level grades over the last three years have been above the national average.

157.At Key Stage 3 overall progress is good for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, although currently it is weaker in Year 8 where no specific information technology lessons are timetabled. At Key Stage 4 pupils' progress is satisfactory through the GCSE short course, including for lower-ability pupils. Opportunities for acquiring new knowledge and understanding are complemented by those which encourage pupils to develop responsibility for their own learning through assessed course work. This enables pupils to become increasingly discerning and independent users. In the sixth form GNVQ students make at least satisfactory progress though some find the rigorous documentation demanding. GCE A-level students make generally good, and sometimes very good, progress.

158.In all years pupils collaborate well and relationships are positive. Individual attention from teachers provides good support for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. Lessons in Years 7 and 9, where classes are taught information technology using a comprehensive scheme of work, and in the GCSE short course produce some very good examples of sustained concentration and independent work. In the sixth form this continues with GNVQ students and particularly those pursuing A-level computing demonstrating sophisticated solutions to problems. At all ages behaviour is good and there is obvious respect for teachers and property. Interest in information

technology is manifest throughout the school with playground conversations including discussions of e-mail and interesting web sites and many pupils using facilities before and after school, during lunchtimes and in clubs at school or at home.

159. The quality of teaching is good, often very good, and in the lessons observed, never less than satisfactory. Very good teaching is characterised by vitality and enthusiasm in both teacher and pupils. A variety of methods and strategies is tailored to elicit the best response from each individual pupil, modified as needed in the light of response. The best lessons support the development of individuals as autonomous users of information technology whether as a tool or an end in itself. Whilst within lessons there is good use of informal feedback to pupils of all ages, more frequent use of formalised assessment should be made in Key Stage 3 where there is no externally imposed examination framework.

160. The number of computers is slightly above average, and the quality of those in the main suites is good. Wide access to the internet and e-mail is a particular characteristic of the school and their use is widespread both in and out of lessons. The school's language college status illustrates very good use of information technology to support language courses. Pupils bring their knowledge of modern foreign languages and wider cultural awareness to information technology lessons, for example by promoting the school to a European audience via the internet. Elsewhere, the use of information technology to support learning across the curriculum is developed less well and opportunities to reinforce and extend information technology skills are restricted by limited access to resources in lessons.

166. Modern foreign languages

161. The high standards of attainment in modern foreign languages reported upon in the previous inspection have not only been maintained but have been improved upon further. The recent language college initiative is being used creatively to provide opportunities for yet more improvement.

162. Attainment for the majority of pupils is in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9 and for many it is above. Their listening skills develop well and they are beginning to speak with some confidence on familiar topics in the foreign language. They are able to read brief texts and understand the main points, although independent reading is not developed well before the sixth form. Pupils write short essays with a good degree of accuracy describing holidays, family and home. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is high and often well above expectations in French and Spanish though it is closer to expectations in German. Recent GCSE results have been above national figures in French but below in German, where the number and range of pupils entered has been wider than is usual nationally. Pupils prepare and deliver speeches on topics such as recent holidays with generally accurate use of past tenses. The language laboratory facilities and computers are used extremely effectively to prepare and support these presentations. The more able linguists write lengthy and largely accurate essays on a range of topics and are beginning to vary their style of writing. Attainment in the sixth form is in line with expectations in German but above this in French. Results at A-level have generally been above national averages in French but below in German. Pupils speak and write with increasing fluency and accuracy on mature topics such as existentialist authors and developments in Germany since reunification. They are able to write in diary, journalese and discursive form. From the early stages of Year 12 the students of French generally speak and write with more confidence and fluency than the students of German.

163. Pupils make satisfactory progress in German in all years, gaining in the understanding and use of an appropriate range of vocabulary and structures. Progress in French and Spanish is good and often very good. The progress that pupils are making in their listening and speaking skills through extensive use of the language laboratory facilities is most marked. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory but could be improved by more targeted use of learning support.

164. Pupils settle well to their work and are often keen to ask questions to further their understanding. They have a desire to do well in the subject and their interest and motivation are increased by the

enthusiasm that they have for using the facilities of the language centre. Pupils have little difficulty sustaining concentration when the learning activities are varied and interesting. Those in the lower sets require support when exposed to sustained use of the target language by the teacher.

165. The quality of teaching is good with many excellent features. It is consistently good or better in French, very good in Spanish and satisfactory or better in German. The language laboratories and computer facilities in the language centre are used to excellent effect to raise pupils' levels of attainment. In the best lessons the subject is taught with verve, energy and a high level of rigorous insistence on accuracy of usage. The enthusiasm that the teachers have for their subject is clearly communicated to the pupils. A wide range of resources is used, with excellent exploitation of the possibilities supplied by the internet. Only very occasionally are there lessons which could be improved by tighter planning and organisation of learning activities.

166. The subject is taught by a very good and rapidly improving department whose qualities have been enhanced by the successful introduction of Spanish and the excellent use made of the facilities provided by language college status. The department is led very well and has embraced its new status with imagination and enthusiasm. In order to improve further it should strive to maintain parity of esteem across the three main languages taught raise the quality of teaching to a consistently high level in all languages establish clear priorities within its planning and evaluate them against their impact on learning and provide greater support for pupils with special educational needs. The accommodation provided by the language centre is excellent but the rooms in the demountable building are in need of replacement.

172. **Music**

167. There were weaknesses in the standards of attainment in music at the time of the last inspection and these have persisted until recently. There are now strong signs of improvement, especially in the standards being reached within lessons.

168. Attainment in music by the end of Year 9 is below average in comparison with other schools. A small number of more able pupils achieve high standards, but the majority of pupils lack the knowledge and skills to be able to compose and perform beyond a basic level. The department has begun to address this by making changes in the curriculum which are already beginning to have an impact on attainment in Year 7, where standards are at least as good as in most other schools.

169. GCSE results were in line with the national average in 1999 and have been well above the national average in two out of the last four years. Pupils in current GCSE groups are working at a standard which suggests that this level of attainment will be maintained. Results at A-level over the last four years have been good. In 1999 two of the three candidates achieved A grades. The standard of attainment in current A-level groups is high and in some cases very high. Most GCSE and A-level students have good instrumental skills and many benefit from the instrumental tuition provided by the County Music Service and from involvement in extra-curricular or out-of-school musical activities.

170. Progress in lessons is good. Pupils are well-motivated and learn quickly from challenging and well-planned activities. A new curriculum plan is helping to ensure that progress is maintained from one year to the next at Key Stage 3. Until recently pupils were not set sufficiently demanding targets and too little attention was paid to long-term planning. Most pupils in Year 9 have not made the progress which could have been expected after more than two years of music lessons. Pupils now have a much clearer idea of what they should be aiming to achieve and individual lessons form part of a longer-term plan. The progress of pupils in GCSE and A-level groups has been good, but the lack of progress at Key Stage 3 has discouraged many pupils from taking examination courses in music. Lessons in Years 7 to 9 are now planned to take account of the needs of pupils with different levels of attainment, enabling all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress.

171.The department is working hard to encourage more pupils to take part in musical activities and to increase the number of pupils taking examination courses by making music at Key Stage 3 more accessible and by setting higher standards. The response of pupils in lessons and the level of interest in music outside lessons are early indications of success. Most pupils concentrate well and readily engage in practical activities. They behave responsibly and co-operate well with each other in group work. An extended range of extra-curricular activities is provided at lunchtimes and after school. Pupils are given opportunities to perform for different audiences, from school assemblies to public concerts in out-of-school venues.

172.The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well-planned and focus on achieving high standards. There is an appropriate balance between different types of activity, ensuring that pupils combine practical skills with an understanding of notation and musical form. Teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and provide pupils with useful feedback on the quality of their work. A new assessment system is currently being introduced, which will help both pupils and teachers to track progress and set targets more effectively. In some lessons more opportunities could be provided for pupils to review work in progress and to identify ways in which it could be improved.

173.To further improve the quality of music provision, several resource issues need addressing. There are no practice rooms for small-group work. Instrumental lessons are given in another part of the school, which makes it difficult for the head of department to monitor the work of the instrumental teachers and for them to be perceived as part of the music team. Pupils have limited access to information technology as a resource for music-making and composing.

179. **Physical education**

174.At the time of the last inspection standards in physical education were generally at an appropriate level, and this remains the case.

175.By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 the attainment of most pupils is broadly in line with national expectations. Some pupils in Key Stage 3 are exceeding national expectations in swimming and games and demonstrate increasingly refined skills in these areas. In Key Stage 4 pupils are able to select appropriate skills within a game situation and high-attaining pupils can perform at pace and under pressure. The attainment of most pupils studying GCSE physical education exceeds the national average, and although examination results have fallen over the last three-year period, they are higher than at the time of the last inspection. The attainment of students in the sixth form studying A-level physical education is below the national average.

176.Most pupils in Years 7 to 11 make good progress. Lower-attaining pupils make most progress when they are encouraged individually by teachers. In Key Stage 4 high-attaining pupils studying GCSE physical education make most progress when they are given opportunities for independent learning and the development of leadership skills. The progress of students in the sixth form studying A-level physical education is satisfactory in theory lessons although it is occasionally unsatisfactory in practical lessons. There are no physical education or recreation lessons for the sixth form generally. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, with pupils grouped sensitively and given appropriate tasks during lessons. This enables them to make good progress.

177.Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and sometimes very good. In Key Stage 3 pupils work well together. Girls are especially good at planning and performing in gymnastics and boys work co-operatively in games. Relationships between staff and pupils are also good. The department has a strong work ethic and well-established working procedures that are understood clearly and appreciated by pupils. Staff treat all pupils with respect and are especially good at encouraging pupils with special educational needs.

178.The quality of teaching is good and frequently very good. Only one observed lesson was less than satisfactory due to inappropriate lesson structure and ineffective use of time. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and the expectation of pupils is consistently high throughout all years. Lessons are planned thoroughly with reference to progressive schemes of work. Teaching methods are mostly matched well to learning objectives and to the needs of the pupils. A greater range of tasks in GCSE theory lessons would enable pupils to make greater progress. The teaching of games is especially strong. Class management and discipline is good. Praise and encouragement is readily given to pupils and there are planned opportunities for groups to evaluate and celebrate learning. Pupils are treated with respect and sensitivity. The use of time and resources is effective in Years 7 to 11 where the pace of lessons is well-judged to meet learning objectives.

179.The quality of education is enhanced by clear leadership, thorough schemes of work and a strong ethos for learning. Facilities are extensive but three of the indoor areas and the changing rooms and showers are all in poor condition and militate against improved standards. Teachers offer a very wide range of sporting and recreational extra-curricular activities which greatly enrich the curriculum and are enjoyed by very large numbers of pupils.

185. Social science courses

180.Sociology is offered as a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. In Years 12 and 13 A-level courses are provided in sociology, as part of a local sixth form partnership, in psychology and in politics which is offered as an after-school extension to the main curriculum.

181.Attainment in sociology at the end of both Years 11 and 13 has generally been good, usually being above both national and school averages. Psychology A-level results in 1999, the first year in which the examination was sat, were high. The attainment of boys taking psychology in 1999 was significantly lower than that of girls. In the present Year 12 and 13 groups there are no boys taking sociology and very few following the psychology course.

182.Progress in lessons is good in sociology throughout Years 10 to 13. Effective use is made of target-setting and monitoring procedures. This process is currently being developed further. A few students do not make sufficient progress primarily because of excessive absence from classes. A key objective is to increase the level of success of these students.

183.Pupils' response in Year 10 and 11 sociology lessons is positive. Students respond well to the A-level course and show a real interest in the subject. Student response to the psychology course is also generally positive although the relatively high number of early leavers from the psychology course is a cause for concern.

184.Teaching is sound and often good. Sociology lessons are planned and structured well and good use is made of student group activities, effective discussion and research work. Lessons in Years 10 and 11 are lively and thoughtfully structured. Relations between teachers and students are very good in all years. The Year 12 and 13 classes have a very purposeful atmosphere and are characterised by varied activities. Extra support is offered through individual subject tutorials. The A-level psychology teaching relies heavily upon teacher-led discussions and explanatory sessions. Although some use is made of group activities and case studies, more varied teaching and learning strategies would enable the needs of the most and least able students to be better met. Teaching in the A-level politics course is effective and student attainment is good. Students have usually chosen the course out of interest and study after the end of the school day. Students respond positively to the course and exhibit obvious enjoyment.

190. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

190. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

185.The inspection was undertaken by a team of sixteen inspectors who, over a period of five days, spent the equivalent of 67 days assessing the work of the school. Over 280 lessons or part-lessons were seen.

186.The current and recent work of a wide range of pupils was seen and, in addition, the work of six representative pupils from each of Years 7 to 13 was examined in detail and all of these pupils were interviewed by inspectors. Discussions were held with members of staff, governors, parents and others who work with the school. Curriculum policies and an extensive range of other school documentation were studied.

187.A meeting was held before the inspection to provide parents with the opportunity to express their views and to inform them about inspection procedures. The meeting was attended by 30 parents. 1700 parental questionnaires were distributed and 887 returned. The responses were analysed and used to inform the inspection team. The Registered Inspector met with teachers, non-teaching staff and the board of governors prior to the inspection to inform them of the inspection process. After the inspection week the Registered Inspector provided senior managers with a detailed debrief of the inspection findings and governors with a survey of the main findings and key issues.

194. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

194. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full- time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1740	38	267	151

194. **Teachers and classes**

194. **Qualified teachers**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	106.15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.39

194. **Education support staff**

Total number of education support staff:	10
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	329.7
Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	77.1
Average teaching group size:	
	KS3 23
	KS4 20

194. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/9
	£
Total Income	5,122,733.00
Total Expenditure	5,100,080.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,980.76
Balance brought forward from previous year	78,636.00
Balance carried forward to next year	101,289.00

194. PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1700
Number of questionnaires returned:	887

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	12.9	64.9	15.3	6.4	0.6
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	29.7	59.8	6.3	3.5	0.7
The school handles complaints from parents well	18.0	46.3	28.2	6.3	1.3
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	15.6	60.7	16.9	6.2	0.6
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	18.5	65.6	9.8	5.5	0.7
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	30.9	61.8	6.1	1.1	0.1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	29.0	57.5	11.0	2.4	0.1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	19.2	65.7	6.6	7.2	1.2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	20.8	60.6	14.7	3.4	0.5
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	17.9	61.1	16.5	4.0	0.6
My child(ren) like(s) school	24.1	60.2	9.9	3.9	1.9

194. Other issues raised by parents

Parents recognised and appreciated the changes that have recently been made, particularly to the form tutor and house systems. They were impressed by the high level of extra-curricular activities, particularly the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, which staff provide. Whilst some felt that homework was appropriately set, a significant minority felt that their children spend too long on homework. Some reported that their children have to struggle with heavy bags over an extensive site and others were concerned at the absence of information technology lessons in Year 8.

194. Summary of responses

Inspectors confirmed the positive views expressed by parents. They judged that overall, the amount and timing of homework is satisfactory but reminded teachers of the need to make minimum acceptable requirements clear to pupils. Governors have been made aware that parents and pupils would appreciate the provision of storage space for pupils' belongings.