

INSPECTION REPORT

The Cornelius Vermuyden School
Canvey Island

LEA area: Essex

Unique Reference Number: 115336

Inspection Number: 185519

Headteacher: Mr. D. Crowe

Reporting inspector: Mr. A. Nicholl
2473

Dates of inspection: 13th – 17th September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708112

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. S. Jack
Date of previous inspection:	October 1995

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		Teaching
		Leadership and management
Mrs. A. Taylor, Lay Inspector	Equality of opportunity	Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mrs. E. Cole	Design and technology	
	Information technology	
Mrs. O. Hall	Art	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
Mr. G. McGinn	History	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mrs. T. McIntosh	Music	
Mr. C. R. Meakin	Mathematics	
Mr. M. Morecroft	Religious education	
Mr. T. Morrison	English	The efficiency of the school
Dr. P. Murray	Science	
Mrs. D. Nicholl	Modern foreign languages	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- By age 16 pupils have made good progress in English and have a secure foundation in literacy.
- Teaching is predominantly good across the school.
- Pupils behave well, have good attitudes to their work and very good relationships with their teachers and with each other.
- The provision for pupils' moral development is good and that for their social development is very good.
- The curriculum provides good careers education, good opportunities for pupils' personal development and very good opportunities for extra-curricular activities.
- There are very good links with the community.
- The school is well led and managed.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Attainment in modern languages is unsatisfactory and there are some weaknesses in teaching.
- II. Attainment in aspects of design and technology is unsatisfactory and there are some weaknesses in teaching.
- III. All pupils at Key Stage 4 are not taught information technology as required by the National Curriculum.
- IV. There are significant shortages of learning resources in a number of subjects.

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

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has developed well since the last inspection. Examination results have risen in line with the upward trend shown nationally. The key issues for action that were identified in the last inspection report have been successfully addressed. For example, the school has made the required improvements to physical education. In addition, clear and effective strategies for the improvement of attainment have been introduced through a school-wide process of setting targets for pupils and for subject departments. The school has sensible targets for improvement and its planning demonstrates that it is well placed to achieve them.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998:

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	D	D	

GCSE examinations	C	B
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Results in the Key Stage 3 tests are better in English than in mathematics and science. In English the results are average when compared to similar schools although below average to all schools. In mathematics and science they are below average when compared to all schools and to similar schools

The school's overall results in the GCSE examinations are average when compared to all schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE passes at grades A*-C is close to the average for all schools but above the average for similar schools. The strongest subjects at GCSE are music, information technology, art and history. French and geography are consistently the weakest subjects.

In contrast with the below average performance in the Key Stage 3 tests, attainment as judged in the inspection was average and higher than that indicated by the tests at Key Stage 3. It was also judged to be average and similar to that indicated by GCSE results at Key Stage 4.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Science, music, physical education and religious education	English, design and technology, and modern languages
Years 10-11	Good	Science, art, geography, history, music, physical education and religious education	Design and technology and modern languages
English	Satisfactory		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of lessons; in 56 per cent of lessons it was good and in 11 per cent it was very good. The quality of teaching was broadly consistent across each of the key stages.

The only poor teaching was in design and technology and modern languages. There were also some small amounts of unsatisfactory teaching in English, history and information technology.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good in lessons and around the school; pupils are courteous and friendly.
Attendance	Satisfactory: in line with the average for secondary schools nationally.
Ethos*	Good: teachers generally have high expectation of their pupils both in terms of behaviour and attainment.
Leadership and management	Good: the school has a clear educational direction and is well led and managed
Curriculum	Satisfactory overall but there is a lack of provision for information technology for some pupils at Key Stage 4.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good: pupils make good progress as they move through the school. They have high quality individual education plans and are very well supported.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Satisfactory overall: spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory, moral development is good and social development is very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory overall: sufficient well-qualified teachers; adequate accommodation; some significant shortages of resources in a number of subjects.
Value for money	Good: the school provides a good quality of education and pupils make good progress.

* *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
V. It is approachable when there are problems. VI. It enables pupils to achieve a good standard of work. VII. It encourages pupils to get involved in more than their daily lessons. VIII. It encourages good behaviour. IX. Their children like coming to school.	X. There were no concerns that were

Inspectors' judgements support parents' views. The school is approachable, it does enable pupils to achieve a good standard of work, it enjoys considerable success in involving pupils in more than their daily lessons, pupils behave well and they enjoy coming to school. At the meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection, parents were fulsome in their praise of the school.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To raise further the standards of work and the quality of learning, the governors and senior managers should take the following actions.

- ◆. Improve standards by ensuring that:
 - . the teaching of modern languages improves so that it is always at least satisfactory and the attainment of pupils improves to at least the national average, (see paragraphs 17, 35, 150, 151 and 155)
 - . the teaching of design and technology improves so that it is always at least satisfactory and the attainment of pupils in those aspects where there are weaknesses improves to at least the national average, (see paragraphs 15, 35, and 127)
 - . there is an appropriate planned programme of information technology at Key Stage 4 for all pupils that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, (see paragraphs 16, 37, 144, 147 and 148)

- ◆. Improve the school's provision by creating a plan that demonstrates how the resource shortages in the subjects identified in this report will be addressed over time. (see paragraphs 116, 122, 128, 135 and 156)

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

- . Improving the attainment of boys relative to girls at Key Stage 4.
- . Improving the teaching of English and art in the combined studies course.
- . Devising a whole school strategy for systematically developing pupils' numeracy skills.
- . Ensuring that there is a daily act of collective worship.
- . Ensuring that all of the required information is included in the school prospectus and the annual governors' report to parents.

These are indicated in paragraphs 19, 35, 50, 66, 76, 77, 89, 95 and 121.

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1.The school is located on Canvey Island in the Thames Estuary in South Essex. Canvey Island has a population of approximately 40,000 people, and has two other secondary schools. The school is a mixed 11-16 comprehensive school.

2.The school tests pupils' attainment on a range of measures as they join Year 7. The results of these tests indicate that on entry attainment is below average.

- . There are 772 pupils on roll (400 boys, 372 girls). (The school is below average in size.)
- . One hundred and fifteen pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs (15% - broadly average).
- . Fifteen have statements for special educational needs (2% - below average).
- . One hundred and fifty two pupils are eligible for free school meals (20% - broadly average).
- . Seven pupils are listed as of other ethnic origins.
- . Three pupils are listed as coming from homes where English is not the first language.

1.The school's aims incorporate notions of traditional values, high expectations and excellence. It set itself targets for improvement in 1998/9 and these included:

- developing quantity assurance strategies for the school,
- setting and using targets to improve attainment,
- improving the programme for economic and industrial understanding,
- improving multi-cultural education,
- improving processes for staff development,
- improving assessment processes,
- developing a home-school contract.

1.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
1998	83	63	146

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	52	45	43
	Girls	46	31	27
	Total	98	76	70
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	69 (61)	54 (48)	49 (49)
	National	65 (56)	60 (59)	56 (66)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	20 (18)	30 (23)	16 (21)
	National	35 (23)	36 (37)	27 (29)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	30	42	17
	Girls	28	31	11
	Total	58	73	28
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	41 (58)	52 (59)	26 (45)
	National	62 (59)	64 (63)	62 (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	12 (23)	11 (24)	6 (20)
	National	31 (28)	37 (37)	31 (29)

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	64	74	138

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	23	56	61
	Girls	35	67	70
	Total	58	123	131
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	42 (34)	89 (97)	95 (97)
	National	44.6 (43)	89.8 (88)	95.2 (94)

Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8.0
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	1.0
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	25
Permanent	3

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	11
Satisfactory or better	93
Less than satisfactory	7

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

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

4. **Attainment and progress**

2. In the last inspection report, attainment was judged to be around national averages and this is still the case. Evidence from classroom observations and from looking at pupils' work indicates that overall attainment is below the nationally expected level at Key Stage 3 (age 14) and close to the national average at Key Stage 4 (age 16). At Key Stage 3, the results of the national tests are below the national averages in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school's test results over the three years, 1996-98, have varied, but when considered as a whole they have been below the national average. The results for 1999 improved in English and in science, but were similar to those for 1998 in mathematics. In 1998, the school's performance in GCSE was in line with the national average. The 1999 results were slightly better than those for 1998. At present the national averages for 1999 have not been published and it is not possible to make comparisons between the school's performance and these figures.

3. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, the proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected level 5 in English was close to the average, but the proportion attaining the higher level 6 was well below average. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils attaining level 5 was below the national average and that for level 6 well below the average. In science, the results were similar; the proportion of pupils attaining level 5 was below average and that for level 6 was well below average. In 1999 in English, the proportion of pupils attaining level 5 was similar, but that attaining level 6 rose considerably. In mathematics, the proportions of pupils attaining levels 5 and 6 were similar to those in 1998, while in science, the proportion of pupils attaining levels 5 and 6 rose. When the 1998 results are compared to those for similar schools, the results for English are average while those for mathematics and science are below average. Thus, as a whole, attainment at Key Stage 3 is below average when compared to schools of a similar kind.

4. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils attaining five A*-C grades was close to the national average, as was that for pupils attaining five grades A*-G. The 1999 results show a small improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining 5 A*-C passes and a bigger improvement in those attaining 5 A*-G passes. The overall performance of pupils at GCSE in 1998 was average when compared to those in all schools and above average when compared to those in schools of a similar kind. Since the last inspection, results have shown an upward trend, broadly in line with the rising trend nationally.

5. The school tests pupils' attainment on entry. The figures from these tests indicate that pupils have begun at The Cornelius Vermuyden School with attainment that has fluctuated over time. However, the records show that overall pupils' attainment is below average, particularly in tests that measure their language skills. The school uses these records of pupils' attainment on entry very effectively to set targets for pupils, to predict GCSE examination results and to monitor its own effectiveness.

6. In English, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is average. By the end of the key stage, pupils can listen effectively to their teacher and to each other. Most are fluent speakers and are able to answer questions readily. Reading has improved since the last inspection. Although many pupils have difficulties with reading at the start, by the end of the key stage they read accurately and with understanding. All pupils can write in an organised legible and well-presented way while the higher attainers can produce examples of extended and complex writing. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also average. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection and in 1998 were above the national average. By the end of the key

stage, pupils have appropriate knowledge of the workings of language, they are confident in their writing and generally know how to use grammar, punctuation and spelling to enhance it.

7. In other subjects the school's developing literacy programme helps pupils to make gains in their oral skills. Pupils are given opportunities for reading aloud and develop expression when doing so. Opportunities are provided for them in most subjects to explore the specialist language and they gain confidence in the use of a range of important vocabulary. They learn to apply their language skills and use them well in conducting investigations and research.

8. In mathematics, attainment in lessons and in pupils' work is below the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to use number in a satisfactory way. They can construct and interpret graphs. They can use simple algebra and algebraic terms and higher attaining pupils can construct formulae. Pupils have a good understanding of shape and can calculate the areas and perimeters of plane shapes and the volumes of solids. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is below average. Most pupils can find solutions to problems involving the manipulation of algebraic terms with confidence and the higher attainers can solve quite complex equations. They can apply the rules of trigonometry to angles and triangles, and higher attainers can use the sine and cosine rules. In both key stages, many pupils have weaknesses in mental arithmetic, and this, rather than a lack of understanding of the mathematics, leads to the production of incorrect or inaccurate answers.

9. Pupils' proficiency with number across the whole curriculum varies. Most pupils cope satisfactorily with number and basic computational skills, but sometimes numeracy is inhibited by a lack of fluency with tables. In many subjects, pupils demonstrate that they can make sense of information presented in graphs, but they are less successful in constructing their own using data they have collected. In design and technology, their measurement skills are satisfactory and they show an understanding of shapes. In geography, pupils can measure distances on maps and accurately establish distances and areas. However, in science, pupils display a lack of confidence in their numeracy skills and sometimes fail to relate them to the subject's requirements. At present, approaches to the development of numeracy skills are not sufficiently systematically developed across the school.

10. In science, attainment is below the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. By the end of the key stage, pupils develop a broad knowledge of a range of topics such as energy, elements, mixtures and compounds, how the human body works, sight and sound, and electricity and magnetism. They have good practical skills and can apply these to investigations and experiments in the laboratory. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is average. All pupils consolidate and develop the knowledge gained at Key Stage 3. In biology, for example, they learn more about the structure of organs, using appropriate scientific terms. The higher attainers have a good understanding of basic theoretical principles and can apply them in practical situations.

11. In music, attainment at Key Stage 4 is very good, and this is due to good planning, good resources and high quality teaching which helps to ensure pupils make very good progress. Attainment in history, physical education and religious education is good at Key Stage 4. Teachers have high expectations in each of these subjects and, in addition, the resources in physical education are very good. As a result pupils make good progress.

12. Attainment in design and technology is below average at Key Stage 4. This is partially due to unevenness in the standards pupils achieve in the different elements of the subject. Thus, attainment and progress in elements concerned with materials are weaker than in those concerned with graphics, and systems and control. In geography, pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 is just below average and the weakness pupils have in their graphical presentation of statistics constrains their progress.

13. In information technology, attainment is above the expected level at Key Stage 3 where a well-planned programme ensures that pupils' skills develop effectively. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is below the expected level. Many pupils at Key Stage 4 follow an examination course in information technology and their attainment is good. However, the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are not taught to all pupils and, in addition, computers are not used effectively across the subjects of the curriculum. A lack of systematic planning of work across the school in information technology leads to the attainment and progress for some pupils being well below average at this key stage.

14. Attainment in modern languages at Key Stage 4 was said to be below the national average in the last inspection report. In 1998, the results of the GCSE examination were close to the national average but they fell considerably in 1999. Overall standards have not improved significantly and attainment is below average at the end of both key stages. Some changes have been introduced since the last inspection but these have not yet begun to promote better progress and thus better levels of attainment across the school. The teaching methods employed in some lessons does not always match the requirements of the curriculum, and work is at times not well matched to pupils' attainment. This is particularly true in classes that contain pupils with a wide spread of attainment. The staffing difficulties the school has experienced over the last few years have had a negative impact on attainment. Pupils' progress is also limited by the time allowed for teaching languages, which is low in comparison with other schools.

15. Attainment in art is average at both key stages. It is also average in design and technology, history, music, physical education and religious education at Key Stage 3.

16. Nationally girls attain better than boys do. At The Cornelius Vermuyden School this effect is even more marked. In the GCSE examinations since 1994, the difference between the boys' and girls' results has been greater than the national average.

17. Pupils' progress overall across the school is satisfactory and there is no evident difference in the progress of boys and girls. Progress is good in both key stages in English and this is due to a well structured programme for reading, a good emphasis on language development across the school, good teaching in Key Stage 4 and setting pupils sound targets for improvement. In mathematics, progress is good in Key Stage 3 where lessons are well structured, pupils are grouped in classes in accordance with their attainment and a new teaching scheme has been introduced. In Key Stage 4, progress in mathematics is satisfactory. In science, progress is satisfactory in both key stages.

18. In other subjects where progress is good, there are clear reasons why this is the case and these are set out alongside the discussion of pupils' attainment above. Pupils make very good progress in music at Key Stage 4. They make good progress in information technology and music at Key Stage 3; in art and religious education at Key Stage 4 and in history and physical education at both key stages.

19. Progress is satisfactory in art, design and technology, geography and religious education at Key Stage 3 and in art at Key Stage 4.

20. In some subjects progress is unsatisfactory and the reasons for this can be seen in the discussion above about pupils' attainment in these subjects. Progress is unsatisfactory in design and technology and information technology at Key Stage 4 and in modern languages in both key stages.

21. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, many make good gains in their literacy, particularly in reading. This enables these pupils to make progress that is at least in line with that of their peers in all of their subjects. Good quality individual education plans have been written for these pupils and these help

teachers to plan systematically for their progress. The support provided by learning assistants is good and this helps to ensure good progress. Assistants invariably have a good knowledge of the pupils they are responsible for and the targets for improvement that have been set in their individual education plans. Generally across the school, work is planned to match pupils' attainment. However, in some classrooms that contain pupils with a wide range of attainment, for example in modern languages, teachers do not always ensure that work is well matched to this range.

24. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

22. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. These are reflected in rising standards of attainment and the good behaviour seen around the school. This is a view shared by parents who feel that the school promotes good attitudes and helps to prepare their children to become good citizens. In class, most pupils are well motivated, work hard and are proud of their achievements. They are able to listen to instructions, and concentrate for long periods. Most respond enthusiastically to challenge and persevere even when they find new work difficult. In lessons, pupils are generally keen to participate in discussion and are confident enough to ask questions and seek help when they have difficulties with their work. By the time they reach Year 11, most pupils are mature, able to work independently and are motivated to achieve well.

23. The quality of relationships throughout the school is very good. This contributes substantially to the very good ethos and pleasant atmosphere to be found in the school. Pupils move around the school between classes in narrow corridors and stairways in an orderly way. Behaviour in the classroom is almost always good. In almost all lessons pupils behave responsibly, show respect for the teacher and each other and work well collaboratively. At times in some lessons, small groups of pupils can lose concentration and become slightly disruptive. This is a result of work being set that is not appropriate to their level of attainment. Lunchtimes are pleasant occasions in which pupils display maturity and civilised behaviour. Pupils and parents understand and respect the rewards and sanctions system used by the school. Merits are given to pupils to reward good attendance, punctuality, academic work and behaviour, and certificates based on the number of merits received are awarded each term. Pupils value these.

24. Bullying is dealt with effectively, and pupils and parents agree that it is not a significant problem at the school. The school culture of tolerance and caring makes any form of harassment unacceptable. Last year there were twenty-eight exclusions. Twenty-five of these were temporary and three were permanent. These figures are higher than in the last inspection report because of a change in school policy. Serious incidents are now dealt with by exclusion. The number of temporary exclusions is broadly in line with the national average while the percentage of permanent exclusions is well below the national average. Pupils from different ethnic origins are well integrated in lessons and the life of the school. A range of cultures and beliefs is respected and discussed appropriately in lessons and the school's equal opportunities policy is addressed effectively across the curriculum.

25. Pupils of all ages are generally enthusiastic about taking responsibility. For example, some pupils in Year 11 are appointed as prefects. In this capacity they act in supervisory roles and provide support and advice for younger pupils. Year 8 and Year 9 pupils take responsibility for the school bookshop and older pupils manage the school tuck shop each day. Pupils in Year 7 act as class monitors. Each year group has a council made up of class representatives and, through this mechanism, all pupils have the opportunity to make their concerns heard. A recent innovation, set up on the initiative of Year 9 pupils, was the Carnival '99 Exhibition and Multi-Cultural Festival. This was very successful in helping to develop pupils' team building and leadership skills and gave them opportunities to work with other adults in the community.

28. Attendance

26. The attendance rate of pupils is in line with the national average for secondary schools. This is a satisfactory picture which positively influences pupils' attainment and progress. The school has worked hard to improve the attendance rate since the last inspection, and as a result it has improved by 1%. The incidence of families taking holidays during school time, as well as a general lack of significance attached to their child's regular attendance by some families, are important factors which contribute to the school's authorised absence figures.

27. Most pupils are punctual in the mornings, and they arrive at lessons on time. Punctuality and time keeping in the school are good.

30. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

30. Teaching

28. Teaching is a strength of the school. It is good in over half of lessons and in one out of every ten it is very good. Almost all lessons are satisfactory, but a proportion of teaching shows weaknesses, and teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson in twenty and poor in a small proportion of lessons. Teaching is broadly consistent in Key Stages 3 and 4.

29. A number of features contributes to the better teaching. In the best lessons teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. There is sound long-term planning through effective teaching schemes in almost all subjects. In almost all lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils' attainment and behaviour. Classroom control is good. Teachers manage their pupils very well and use encouragement and humour effectively to motivate them. Their methods are good and they are appropriate to the knowledge and skills that are being taught. Time and resources are used well and there is often a crisp pace through lessons. Homework is often used well to support and extend pupils' understanding of work begun in class. In the meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection, parents also expressed this view. During the inspection week, homework was set with reasonable consistency. It was, in the main, of a good quality and was planned to extend and develop the work begun in class. In some subjects, inspectors expressed concerns about the lack of textbooks to support homework and these are detailed in the subject section of this report.

30. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is used well by many teachers to ensure activities are matched to levels of attainment, although this is a weakness in some lessons.

31. In all subjects there are many examples of better teaching and some of these are set out below.

- In English, in a Year 9 poetry lesson, the poem "Sally" was used to introduce some of the more complex writing techniques used by poets. The poem compares Sally to a dog rose. The teacher produced a dog rose and invited the pupils to feel it, smell it and to describe it to help them understand what the poet was trying to convey in his description of Sally.
- In mathematics, in a Key Stage 4 lesson concerning the equation representing a straight line, the teacher involved the whole class in explaining the gradient of a straight line. All of the pupils were required to hold up one of their arms to help them with their understanding of the concept of gradient. This demonstration ensured their interest. The lesson was planned with a variety of tasks, including a session of quick-fire questions on number. Pupils made good progress in their understanding and the teacher was careful to check this as the lesson proceeded.
- In art, in a Year 9 lesson looking at surrealist paintings, pupils were engaged by the teacher in a lively discussion of what was "real" and what was "surreal" in the depictions in selected paintings by famous artists. The teacher's well-managed techniques helped the pupils to elaborate their responses and come to a definition of surreal. Pupils were then able to work

out the meaning of another painting on their own. They found the session fun and left the room talking about what they had found out.

- In religious education, in a Year 10 lesson on man's responsibilities towards the planet earth, the teacher used a question and answer technique. Headings had been written on the blackboard to help pupils to focus examples of causes and effects. The teacher used well-judged changes in activity to maintain the momentum of the lesson. At the end of this analytical and descriptive stage there followed a reflective session in which pupils were asked to think deeply about something beautiful that they treasured, how it might be spoilt, and what they would feel like when this happened.
- In modern languages, in a Year 7 German lesson, the teacher's objective was to teach the numbers one to twelve. She employed a range of strategies and resources including games, a video and a cassette tape. The pupils enjoyed all of the activities and by the end of the lesson could recognise and use the numbers effectively.

1. Teaching was poor on occasion in modern languages at Key Stage 4 and unsatisfactory on occasions in Key Stage 3. On these occasions the organisational methods employed by the teacher did not ensure that the curriculum requirements were being met. Teaching was also poor on occasions in design and technology where problems with planning and classroom control did not ensure that pupils made effective progress. In the combined studies course in Year 7, there were examples of unsatisfactory teaching in English, due mainly to a lack of knowledge by a teacher teaching outside of their specialist subject. There are some weaknesses even in sound teaching that would, if attended to, help all pupils make faster progress. Some of these are exemplified in the examples of weaker teaching set out below.

● In English, in a combined studies lesson, the class was working on a class reading book. The teacher paused appropriately in the reading to aid the pupils' understanding of the text. However, the teacher's subject knowledge was insufficient to develop pupils' literary appreciation, for example interpreting the meaning of what they had read and the nuances of character.

- In mathematics, in a lesson on times and the 24-hour clock in Key Stage 3, the teacher used the textbook as the means of explaining important ideas. They transferred data to the blackboard without involving more than a handful of pupils in the explanation. No guidance was given to pupils about how to present solutions to problems
- In modern languages, in a Key Stage 4 German lesson, the teacher gave the pupils a series of exercises to do with insufficient introduction and little follow up. The teacher and the pupils spoke very little German in the lesson. The pupils marked their own work and the teacher took no account of their marks during the lesson.

1. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory and often good. Most teachers have a good knowledge of these pupils and their specific difficulties. They relate well to them and generally motivate them well so that they want to learn and will persevere when the work is difficult. Sound emphasis is placed on developing pupils' reading skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most subjects. Their progress is especially good in those lessons where a learning assistant supports them. All pupils with special educational needs have an individual education plan. These are well written and set out appropriate, sharply-focussed targets for both teachers and pupils to work towards. These plans are in the main used effectively by teachers to ensure that work in lessons is well matched to pupils' attainment.

36. The curriculum and assessment

2. The overall arrangements for the curriculum are sound. Since the last inspection teaching time has been increased to 25 hours each week to bring it in line with national recommendations. The curriculum is broad and balanced and designed to promote pupils' intellectual and physical needs and prepare them effectively for work or the next stage of education. There are satisfactory processes in place to ensure that the curriculum is regularly monitored and reviewed through a process involving heads of subject departments. members

of the senior management team and the governors' curriculum committee. Despite these arrangements, the school is not meeting the statutory requirement to teach all pupils information technology at Key Stage 4.

3. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum has satisfactory breadth and balance and meets the statutory requirements. A combined studies course is used to teach English, art, geography, history and drama to pupils in Year 7. It is no longer used to teach pupils in Year 8; a change introduced in response to the criticism raised in the last inspection report. The programme is well coordinated and ensures a smooth transition from primary to secondary education, and this undoubtedly contributes to the increased levels of attainment between Key Stages 2 and 3. There are, however, weaknesses in the subject knowledge in English and art of some members of the teaching team. The time provided for subject teaching is generally adequate. However, the teaching time for modern foreign languages is insufficient in Key Stage 3 and that allowed for information technology is low in Year 7. There is, in the main, equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils although there are exceptions in design and technology and art. In the former, provision is uneven and pupils have different allocations of teaching in food technology and textiles due to staff shortages. In art in Year 7, some pupils work outside the specialist art rooms and this limits their opportunities. A number of the potentially highest attaining pupils are identified in Year 7 and provided with a specially designed course that extends their level of competency and their understanding of topics that are not part of the taught curriculum.

4. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum offered is suitably varied, given the nature and size of the school. The statutory requirements are met, except in information technology where the school does not ensure that all pupils are taught the National Curriculum Programme of Study. Since the last inspection, the school has ensured that the locally agreed syllabus for religious education is now taught in full. In addition, all pupils are entered for the short course GCSE examination. A wide range of subjects is offered at Key Stage 4 including child development, drama, media studies, sport studies and business studies. All pupils follow a double science GCSE course. Classical Civilisation is studied by some higher attaining pupils, who are entered for the GCSE examination at the end of Year 9 and the A/S level examination at the end of Year 11. Some pupils also follow the Open University course in classics and are entered for this examination at the end of Year 11. A few pupils are entered for the GCSE mathematics examinations at the end of Year 10. A course has been specifically designed for pupils with learning difficulties. This is vocationally orientated, helps them to develop a wide range of skills and leads to a nationally recognised qualification. In Year 11, these pupils also follow an information technology and a single science course.

5. Pupils with special educational needs are taught alongside their peers for all lessons. They are supported in some lessons by learning support teachers or assistants. Extra help with reading is given to those who need it through a reading club, which is held during tutor time in the morning. Only in exceptional circumstances are pupils withdrawn from lessons. The good progress that these pupils make, clearly indicated by measured gains in their reading ages, demonstrates that the system is effective. Special arrangements to allow pupils full access to the curriculum, as detailed in their individual education plans, have been put in place. For example, one pupil who has particular difficulty with noting down homework has been supplied with a means of recording it on to a cassette tape.

6. There are good links with local primary schools which enable there to be good continuity in pupils' progress in most subjects. The school also collaborates effectively with colleges that provide post 16 courses to help ensure that pupils can make a smooth transition to the next stage of education.

7. A well-planned and coordinated personal and social education course ensures that there are good arrangements for sex, drugs and careers education. The careers education element of this programme is well supported by the Essex Careers and Business Service Partnership and provides pupils with a good knowledge and understanding of the world of work. Every pupil undertakes work experience for three weeks in the autumn term in Year 11.

8. A very good range of extra-curricular sporting events enhances the curriculum provision. There is a full and successful programme of inter-school activities at local, area and county levels. The school won the National Athletics Competition in 1996 and qualified for the Sportsmark Award in 1998. A third of pupils are involved in at least one of thirteen sporting activities. In addition, a good range of activities is available in music, and there are drama and art evenings as well as an extensive range of visits to theatres and museums. The modern languages department organises visits to Paris and there are fieldwork activities in geography, history and science. Community links are used well to enrich the curriculum through, for example, links with British Petroleum and the Neighbourhood Engineers Scheme.

9. Practices in assessment have improved since the last inspection. They have been the subject of a comprehensive review which included an audit by an external consultant. A good policy clearly sets out the purpose of assessment, the principles that govern it and how it should be applied to the marking of pupils' work. It also prescribes the range of tests and examinations which are to be used throughout the school. The policy works well and provides a good basis for judging the value the school adds to pupils' attainment. Most departments follow its principles closely in their practice. A member of the senior staff oversees the implementation of the policy and the analysis of the results.

10. The school tests pupils' attainment as they join Year 7. The results of these tests, along with those from national tests and teacher assessments made at the end of Key Stage 2, are used as a basis for tracking pupils' progress. This information is used to help to ensure that pupils are placed in appropriate teaching groups and provided with suitable work. As pupils move through the school, the data is supplemented by teacher assessment and used, with success, to predict pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. As a result, the school is able to gauge the impact it is having on pupils' learning and overall progress.

11. There is a comprehensive system for monitoring the progress of all pupils in Key Stage 4. All parents of Year 10 pupils now receive a detailed document that lists their son or daughter's target grades for GCSE examinations. Heads of department and heads of year then closely monitor pupils' progress. In Year 11, these processes are further supplemented by a thoughtful mentoring programme involving adults from outside the school. These processes have helped the school improve its GCSE examination results.

12. Almost all departments have assessment policies that reflect the whole-school policy. These policies are detailed, and, in the main, implemented consistently, although the procedures in art are not in line with the rest of the school. Departments keep examples of pupils' work at different levels of attainment to help teachers standardise their assessments. The school has a clear marking policy that is generally implemented by the staff. Most marking is thorough and the best provides useful written comments that help pupils improve their standard of work. Most of the inconsistency in the marking that was criticised in the last report has been eradicated, although this is not entirely the case in the English, mathematics, art and history departments.

13. The school has very effective systems for assessing pupils with special educational needs. They meet statutory requirements and are well understood by staff. Individual education plans are effective; they summarise test evidence and pupils and parents contribute to the pupils' well written targets. Parents attend annual reviews of pupils' progress. Where it is appropriate, pupils also attend these reviews.

48. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

14. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has clear aims that stress the importance of Christian values, caring relationships and respect for others. These continue to be realised in practice and are commended by parents. The promotion of good moral and social behaviour is a strength of the school.

15. The arrangements for spiritual development are satisfactory. The school has gone some way to addressing the concerns raised in the last inspection report regarding collective worship. The quality of assemblies is now more uniform. A sound policy for worship has been written and this provides useful guidelines for all staff. Assemblies do not always provide opportunities for reflection and thus they do not always form an act of collective worship in line with the statutory requirement. They are used well, however, to support pupils' moral development and to celebrate their academic and other achievements at all levels. Form tutors use a new set of daily readings to support the weekly theme for assembly in form time. However, the implementation by tutors of the requirement for pupils to reflect on values and beliefs is still variable. As a result, these form meetings do not constitute a daily act of worship. A number of subjects of the curriculum make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The most significant of these is religious education, where many opportunities are created for pupils to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life, often through imaginative meditation. Other subjects such as history, geography and personal and social education, also encourage pupils to reflect on their attitudes and beliefs when learning about other cultures and man's impact on the environment. However, in subjects such as mathematics and science pupils are provided with too few opportunities for activities of this kind.

16. The provision for moral development is good. The school has a well-understood and widely publicised code of conduct which the pupils helped to construct. The code provides clear guidance and this is reinforced by staff who act as good and effective role models. Consequently, pupils have a clear sense and understanding of the differences between right and wrong. Achievements in all areas of school life are encouraged and well rewarded, including the newly extended rewards scheme involving some prizes provided by local businesses such as McDonalds. Moral concerns are explored in most subjects of the curriculum, and this can be seen clearly, for example, in the work on care for the environment in geography and science and that on warfare in history. The personal and social education programme is effective in encouraging pupils to develop responsible attitudes towards controversial issues such as smoking, drugs and alcohol. The qualities of tolerance, trust and respect are especially well emphasised throughout the school. Much of the reason for the school's good, positive ethos stems from the stress it places on developing and inculcating in its pupils an increasing awareness of their own responsibilities towards the environment and their own learning.

17. Provision for social development is very good. This is largely due to the wide range of extra-curricular activities for which the school earned the Education Extra Award in 1997. Pupils are frequently asked to work collaboratively in lessons, in sporting activities and in lunchtime and after-school clubs. There are school visits organised in several subjects such as history, geography, physical education and modern languages. Other activities such as the Year 7 Industry Days and the Year 9 multi-cultural festival offer pupils a wealth of opportunities to work cooperatively and to develop their social awareness. The arrangements for school lunch, the provision of a good quality menu and a civilised atmosphere help to create daily occasions for pupils to develop their social skills. Pupils are able to undertake additional responsibilities as school council representatives, organisers of clubs, and helpers in the library and information technology room. They are also encouraged to participate in the community. For instance, many are involved with an annual Christmas delivery of parcels to senior citizens: others in the Canvey Carnival. Year 10 pupils participate in "master classes" at

the local sixth form college in English, mathematics and science. Pupils raise money, through discos and sponsored walks, to support charity. For example, they help a village and a child in Kenya. The display of trust in the pupils by staff is making a positive impact on developing their self-esteem and respect for others.

18.The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. The school provides a number of cultural opportunities for pupils and aims to widen their experience and horizons. Cultural traditions are studied in history, art and literature. Lunchtime clubs in art, music and drama provide pupils with cultural enrichment. There are visits to historic sites, geography field centres and to local concerts. Visits to galleries, museums, theatres and concert halls are less common and overall pupils are insufficiently exposed to wider aesthetic experiences. Pupils are prepared in a satisfactory way for life in a multi-cultural society through, for example, work in religious education which raises an awareness of other cultures and racial issues. In addition, a number of departments organised a multi-cultural festival for Year 9 pupils, culminating in exhibitions of food, dress, drama and dance from different countries.

53. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

19.Pupils receive a good quality of support, guidance and care. It is a strength of the school that staff give a high priority to pupils' welfare and, as a result, encourage good behaviour.

20.Procedures for checking and recording each individual pupil's academic progress and personal development are very good. These processes are well supported by a good quality assessment policy which provides a clear school-wide framework for teachers to follow. Form tutors and heads of year monitor the progress of individual pupils well and heads of year check regularly on those pupils who are causing some concern. Year 10 pupils are given a clear idea of their expected GCSE examination grades. These are shared with parents, and pupils are actively encouraged to work towards them. For example, Year 11 pupils are supported through a well-established system of mentors. These are adults from the local community and businesses whose role is to ensure that each pupil receives individual guidance throughout their final year. Practices such as these are helping to raise standards in the school.

21.Annual reports contain comments about each pupil's personal development, written by their tutor, head of year, and the headteacher. The quality of these is good and demonstrates that teachers know their pupils well. Reports set pupils targets for improvement in each subject area. Whilst most of the targets set are helpful, a minority are not clear enough, or simply praise the pupils for their good work. There is a comprehensive range of awards, certificates and prizes for good work and effort, as well as gold, silver and bronze awards for effort and achievement. These provided good encouragement for pupils to work hard and achieve well.

22.The support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are well supported in class and throughout the school day. Each pupil has a very good quality individual educational plan setting out clear helpful targets for improvement which have been thoroughly discussed with them.

23.The school's procedures for encouraging positive behaviour are very good. A clear code of conduct formalises the school's requirements and this has created an atmosphere of trust and self-discipline. Adults in the school provide good role models for pupils to follow and teachers have high expectations of good behaviour in and around the school. Any instances of poor behaviour are dealt with well. The school keeps efficient records of those who find good behaviour hard and many staff are experienced in handling pupils' challenging behaviour. These pupils are provided with helpful strategies to help them to improve their behaviour. Parents say they are pleased with the standard of behaviour in the school.

24. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy, which details how help can be provided for pupils. This is reviewed from time to time through the school council, when pupils' views are incorporated. Teachers are consistent in attempting to help pupils to understand that they must come and talk to them if they are at all worried about bullying. In conversations with inspectors, pupils said that bullying was rare. Certainly none was witnessed during the inspection.

25. The school takes the issue of pupils' non-attendance seriously. Attendance is monitored effectively and the school has worked hard to increase pupils' attendance since the last inspection. Teachers take pride in working to increase the attendance rate of their tutor and year groups and many regard it as a personal challenge to ensure the attendance rate does not fall. Heads of year make personal telephone calls to ascertain why pupils are away and make a point of seeing the absentees each week. These procedures are a very time-consuming process for teaching staff and there is insufficient use of clerical support to monitor and streamline checking on pupils' attendance.

26. There have been considerable improvements in the way in which good attendance is promoted since the last inspection. These procedures are now good. Pupils are strongly encouraged to attend regularly. Local businesses sponsor awards for full attendance, and these include a wide range of stickers, certificates and other incentives. The importance of not taking holidays during term time is stressed to parents when they ask for holiday leave to be granted. The school has suitable measures in place to deter pupils from being late in the mornings and late detentions are handed out for persistent offenders.

27. Health and safety procedures are good, in the main, although some concerns about practice in design and technology were noted. The person responsible for health and safety in the school is well trained and keeps up to date with current practices. A committee of staff meets regularly to discuss areas of concern. The procedures for child protection are good. A second person has recently been trained to assume the named responsibility for this area. The school's induction programme for new staff includes a session on these procedures and briefings for all staff take place regularly.

28. There is a range of very good systems that help to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils. The well-planned personal and social education programme, which includes health education and careers guidance ensures pupils are prepared to face the many challenges and choices they will meet. During the inspection, younger pupils learnt of the importance of personal safety whilst older ones discussed their rights as consumers under the Sale of Goods Act. Drugs education is also covered systematically in each year group. Lessons, for example, where pupils take part in a role play situation in a scene where drugs are offered in a night-club, help to reinforce clear messages to pupils. Displays around school help ensure that these messages stay in pupils' minds.

29. The school makes very good provision to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are met. New pupils are provided with a comprehensive and reassuring booklet before term starts which helps to allay some of their fears. Prefects are attached to each Year 7 tutor group to help new pupils settle in well. The "Allsorts" club offers somewhere for pupils to go during their lunchbreak; here they receive a friendly welcome and can take part in various games and activities. An innovative arrangement called "circle of friends" is designed to help those pupils who find interacting with others difficult. It offers them support whilst helping to develop a more tolerant understanding of others. A homework club is usually well attended by pupils and well supported by staff. Many adults in the school give of their own time generously to support the pupils, both during lunchbreaks and before and after school.

64. Partnership with parents and the community

30. The school has created a good partnership with parents and has a very good involvement with the local community and primary schools. Practice in these areas of the school's life has improved since the last inspection. As a result, the school is now a very active participant in many aspects of the island's community life and in the provision of education in its widest sense.

31. The quality of information provided for parents is good. A well-produced prospectus sets out a broad outline of life at the school and portrays a very positive image. Although the approach taken to learning support is described, the required statement of the school's special educational needs policy is not included. The Governors' Annual Report contains a satisfactory amount of detail but some of the information required is missing. Informative and interesting newsletters, written and edited with the help of pupils, contain a personal message from the headteacher about current school issues. Individual letters to parents about school procedures supplements these, as the need arises.

32. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in their child's education. Special parents' evenings are held where they can meet teachers and talk over issues that concern them. An awards ceremony also takes place each year, where these pupils' achievements are recognised. Liaison arrangements with primary schools concerning the transfer of pupils with special educational needs and their subsequent induction into school are thorough and sensitive.

33. Parents are kept well informed about how well their child is working and they indicated to inspectors that they were happy with the information provided about their child's progress. Pupils' annual reports are detailed and of good quality. The comments written by subject teachers are put into context by a commentary written by the tutor, head of year and the headteacher. Reports contain targets for improvement in each subject area. In the main these are clear, but occasionally they are too vague. For example, "carry on with the good work" rather than positively indicating directions for improvement. Interim reports provide parents with an indication of the effort their child is making, and parents of Year 11 pupils are provided with a grade to show how much their child has attained. This information is further enhanced by parents' evenings to discuss reports. In addition, there are meetings to provide information about specific issues, such as the targets being set for Year 10 pupils, the provision of education after Year 11 and the arrangements planned for work experience. The school takes pride in making itself accessible for parents, particularly for those with children in Year 7. For example, half-termly meetings are held to discuss combined studies and modern foreign languages.

34. Parents who attended the meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection and those who replied to the questionnaire said they were well informed about school life. They also felt encouraged to play an active part in school life, although many parents do not take the opportunities offered them. A number of important strategies have been developed to help encourage parents' support for their children's education. For example, Year 7 parents receive a helpful leaflet offering advice about what they can do to help their child with reading, and homework diaries and reading logs help to ensure their active interest. Overall, parents provide a satisfactory level of support for the school. The parent teachers' association works hard to raise money and this is used to buy resources. Their hard work is having a positive effect upon standards in the school.

35. Liaison with primary schools is good and a number of well-devised programmes are organised to help to ensure that the curriculum across the schools has continuity. These programmes are designed to enhance pupils' skills in a wide range of subjects. In addition, a member of the school's music department staff has time allocated each week to visit all primary schools to provide music sessions and Year 6 pupils attend weekly basketball

sessions after school. Initiatives of this kind are having a positive effect upon standards.

36.The school has established a close partnership with the sixth form college closest to the school. Representatives from the college attend Open Days, run drop in sessions for Year 11 pupils, attend personal and social education lessons, host information evenings for parents and run “master classes” for Year 10 pupils in English, mathematics and science. This strong partnership helps to ensure pupils are well prepared for life after school and results in a smooth transition from school to post 16 education.

37.The school’s links with the wider community are very extensive. It is a centre for adult education and the Open University. There are well-established links with a number of major employers and with small businesses. These links are exploited to provide adult mentors from the community to support Year 11 pupils as they prepare for their final examinations. Pupils are also involved in the work of a senior citizens’ home and local playgroups. Community events such as the recent Carnival add a richness and vibrancy to the curriculum.

72. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

72. Leadership and management

38.The school is well led and managed. Working closely with the governing body, the headteacher provides a clear sense of purpose for the work of the school. There is a strong sense of all of the staff working together as a team. The school’s goals are shared on a wide basis and opportunities for leadership at all levels are promoted. All of the school staff and the governing body contribute to the production of the school’s annual development plan. Although the published plan only includes the targets for the developments expected to take place within a year, it is supported by a clear understanding of the longer-term needs of the school. The plan is of good quality and includes timescales, sets out the name of the member of staff responsible and provides an outline of the resource requirements for each of the priorities. It provides a good means of supporting and evaluating curriculum developments. In addition, it provides the basis for a regular report by the headteacher at governors’ meetings which enables the governors to review the progress the school has made in meeting the targets set for development.

39.The headteacher is well supported by his deputy head and senior managers and the work of middle managers is generally good. However, there is a weakness in some of the development plans written by heads of subject departments to support the overall school plan. In these cases, the costs of the training and resources that will be needed to ensure that development can take place successfully have not been analysed and recorded. There is effective and dedicated leadership for the work of the special needs department. One of the governors exercises good oversight and support for this area of work.

40.There are sound arrangements for monitoring the work of the school. These include interviews with heads of department to set targets for the attainment of pupils in the subject, regular departmental reviews and the observation of teaching. At present these arrangement do not, however, ensure that every teacher is observed formally on at least an annual basis although there are plans for this to begin during the current academic year. Pupils’ attainment on entry is measured and this is used to predict examination grades and to analyse each individual’s progress as they move through the school. These analyses allow senior managers to compare the school’s performance in terms of the improvement it makes in attainment between the start of Year 7 and the end of Year 11. The data is also used to analyse the differences in attainment in boys and girls and the improvement that the school is able to make to this.

41. The school has an appropriate set of aims. These are supported by an appropriate set of values and policies which are effectively reflected in its day-to-day work. It has created a good caring ethos that is characterised by good relationships and an effective learning environment with, in the main, equal opportunities. However, the fact that all pupils at Key Stage 4 do not follow the National Curriculum for information technology and that pupils in Key Stage 3 follow slightly different programmes for design and technology mean that there are not equal opportunities for all pupils.

42. In the main the school meets the statutory requirements, however it does not do so in the following areas:

- it does not ensure that the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are taught in full in information technology to all pupils at Key Stage 4,
- it does not ensure that all of the information required by statute is contained in the school prospectus or the governors' annual report to parents,
- it does not ensure that there is a daily act of collective worship.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

1. There are sufficient teachers to teach the demands of the National Curriculum. A very few staff are not qualified as teachers although most of these are enlisted on a programme of training and are working towards this qualification. Teachers' subject knowledge is in the main good. However, in the combined studies programme, the wide range of subjects taught means that they often operate outside their subject expertise. This results in some weaknesses in the teaching of English and art.

2. Overall, the school has a good number of support staff with appropriate qualifications and experience. There is currently a small shortfall in the number of hours worked by science support staff and this is exacerbated by the fact that some laboratories are placed some distance from the others.

3. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. A staff development committee oversees these and ensures that training is appropriately focused on the priorities in the school development plan. Training opportunities are also linked to the results of appraisal which now involves all staff. The school's business manager oversees the recently introduced programme of appraisal for support staff. Induction arrangements for new teaching staff and those who are newly qualified are also good and a well-documented programme of training and support is organised.

4. The accommodation is well maintained and enhanced by good quality displays. It allows all of the subjects of the National Curriculum to be taught effectively. The specialist rooms are adequate for the school's current needs. Provision is particularly good for physical education with extensive playing fields, a sports hall and fitness room, and for music, with a recording studio. Rooms are generally of a good size although in history they are too small to allow some aspects of the subject to be dealt with effectively. In design and technology, the furnishing of some rooms is not in keeping with the changes introduced by the National Curriculum. The library is of a satisfactory standard and plans are currently in place to build a new library and resource centre.

5. The overall standard of learning resources in the school, both in terms of quality and quantity, is unsatisfactory and shortages in some subjects are having an impact on standards. Although resources are good in physical education, music and aspects of history there are weaknesses in those for science, art, design and technology, geography and modern foreign languages. For example, in science there are shortages of equipment and reference books and the department's computers are old and outmoded. In design and technology, there are significant gaps in all of the aspects studied, such as a lack of graphics tables and deficiencies in large pieces of machinery. In art, there is a shortage of learning resources for

the Year 7 combined studies course and limited materials for Key Stage 3 pupils. The age of textbooks was a concern raised at the time of the last inspection. This has been largely resolved (apart from in food technology) and the issue is now that of shortages rather than age. The science, geography, design and technology and modern languages inspectors all report that there are shortages of textbooks in these subjects. The library is well resourced and has a good selection of books.

6.The school makes good use of visits from members of the community who come into school to enhance provision. Visits to local companies and other institutions enhance learning in several subject areas. For instance, pupils visited Mcdonald's, in connection with their food technology course, to learn about food production at first hand.

83. The efficiency of the school

7.Financial planning in the school is good. There is an extensive school development plan which outlines the school's priorities in developing the curriculum and raising standards. This has been arrived at through a clear consultative process and is based on the good use of current data and future projections. The plan contains only outline costs for each of the priorities. Financial planning papers that support it provide evidence of careful budgetary planning to support these priorities. The school currently has a small surplus in its budget.

8.The governing body has created appropriate committees to help oversee the work of the school. These include a finance committee who work with the senior managers to plan the budget and who also receive and review regular reports about expenditure. There are good systems in place within the school office to monitor the use of the budget over the year. The records of income and expenditure are well kept. They have been audited independently and the audit report made no recommendations for improvements in the school systems. It is clear that financial control is good and the school is well administered on a day-to-day basis.

9.The additional sums that the school receives for teachers' professional development are used in an effective way to support the priorities of the development plan. Funding made available for provision for pupils with special educational needs is used well to ensure that these pupils make good progress.

10.The school makes effective use of its available learning resources to improve standards, however, there are deficiencies in some subjects of the curriculum. Teaching and support staff are deployed well, in the main, throughout the school, although teachers' specialist skills are not always well deployed in the combined studies programme. Accommodation is used well except in combined studies, where although it is available, the specialist accommodation is not used for teaching art.

11.The overall attainment of pupils when they join the school is below average. The quality of education provided by the school is good. Pupils make good progress and their attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 improves so that it is in line with the national average and better than that in similar schools. Although the expenditure per pupil is high in comparison with that for secondary schools nationally, overall the school provides good value for money.

88. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

88. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

88. English

12. Attainment overall at Key Stage 3 is close to the national average. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 1998, the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level 5 was close to the national average although the proportion reaching the higher level 6 was below average. Overall these results were average when compared to those for similar schools. The results for 1999 have risen and a much higher proportion of pupils attained level 6. Attainment at Key Stage 4 as observed during the inspection is average. In the GCSE examination in 1998 the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was above the national average for English language and close to the average in literature. The results for English language in 1999 fell while those for literature rose considerably. The performance of girls is better than that of boys, by more than the national average, at both key stages. Pupils studying English perform well at Key Stage 4 in comparison with their attainment in most other subjects in the school.

13. At the end of Key Stage 3, many pupils speak and listen confidently in a wide range of contexts. They ask questions and participate in discussion, paying attention to what others say, which, in turn, informs their own contribution. Pupils study for a certificate of spoken English in Year 7 and this is invaluable in setting and raising standards. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils are confident in the appropriate use of standard English. Lower attaining pupils are beginning to vary their expression and vocabulary and adapt their speech more confidently.

14. Many pupils enter the school with particular weaknesses in reading. A structured reading programme encourages pupils to read a variety of literature with increasing confidence and accuracy. Pupils' attainment in reading is tested regularly using standardised tests and the results indicate a considerable improvement by many pupils during Key Stage 3. All pupils show understanding of what they read, and many are able, by the end of the key stage, to identify important features, themes and characters. Higher attaining pupils make more personal responses by referring to aspects of language, structure and themes to justify their views. Pupils' work in Key Stage 4 shows that many are reading widely and independently. They articulate personal and critical responses to poems, plays, and novels in a manner that displays understanding and awareness of the features in the writing.

15. Pupils' attainment in writing is more variable. They are able to produce writing for a range of different purposes and different readers. Pupils make good use of dictionaries and thesauruses. At the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils are more confident and use a range of sentence structures and vocabulary. Spelling is generally correct, and paragraphing and punctuation aid the clarity and coherence of their writing. Lower attaining pupils write simpler sentences. These are usually punctuated correctly and follow the basic rules of grammar. Across the key stage, pupils improve their spelling and punctuation. They attempt to use more complex structures and language and their writing becomes more thoughtful and stimulating. By the end of Key Stage 4, there is increasing subtlety in the structure of their writing and their choice of vocabulary. Their spelling and punctuation have become more accurate. Pupils demonstrate an increasing understanding of literary texts and are able to convey their ideas in different styles of writing. They are able to use information technology in both key stages to aid re-drafting and improve the presentation of their work. However, presentation is not always of a high standard.

16. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. All make significant gains in their oral skills and personal development. They develop confidence in the use of a range of vocabulary

and expression. They are encouraged to read widely and their competence improves. The good use of the library in English lessons helps pupils with their progress in reading and also helps to them to make sound progress with their research skills. Pupils' progress in the development of their writing skills is only satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress across both key stages. The well-planned and managed reading programme helps many of these pupils to make significant gains in their reading age. Extension work is also provided for higher attaining pupils and this enables them also to make good progress.

17. Pupils have good attitudes to English. Generally, once pupils have settled, they work well in groups and are able to discuss and engage in meaningful conversation. Most pupils listen well, become actively engaged in tasks, are motivated and generally work productively. They are usually eager to make contributions and these are valued and responded to positively by staff and pupils. Pupils' co-operative attitudes and good behaviour make a substantial contribution to their progress. Relationships are good. Lessons in both key stages, but particularly in Key Stage 3, are characterised by pupils' involvement, application and enjoyment.

18. The majority of teaching is at least satisfactory, almost half of it is good and some lessons are very good. In Key Stage 3, teaching is at least sound in three-quarters of lessons and good in a third of them. It is, however, unsatisfactory in around a quarter of lessons. Teaching is better in Key Stage 4 where all lessons are at least satisfactory and over half of them are good. In the main, teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to develop pupils' understanding of language. This is not the case for some teachers in the combined studies course where a lack of subject knowledge leads to some unsatisfactory teaching. In this small number of lessons, because of the teachers' insecure knowledge and understanding of the subject, opportunities to develop learning are missed, and the pace of the lesson is not appropriate to the required tasks. Most lessons are planned well. As a result, time is used effectively and appropriate resources are chosen to meet the lesson objectives and the needs of pupils. Classroom management and control are good. Teachers are committed to improving pupils' attainment and expectations are generally high. This is particularly so at Key Stage 4 when they set them targets for attainment in their GCSE examinations. The best teaching integrates language teaching with the use of literature, thus providing reinforcement of pupils' knowledge and skills. Homework is set regularly, reinforcing and extending work begun in class. Marking is inconsistent at Key Stage 3, despite the clear marking policy. Often, it fails to provide pupils with advice on improving their work. At Key Stage 4, marking is thorough and informative and enables pupils to make progress. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on the acquisition of accurate standard English, and encourage imaginative and creative work.

19. The school places an important emphasis on the development of pupils' English across the curriculum. A whole-school literacy policy is being developed and the discussion of this has served to heighten the awareness of all teachers concerning the contribution that their subject makes to the development pupils' use of language. The library and its use plays an important part in the work of many subjects. In technical subjects, pupils are given opportunities to gain confidence in their use of new subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils are given good opportunities for conducting research and producing pieces of extended writing that sustain an argument in many subjects but particularly in history and geography.

20. The department is well led and managed. It benefits from the fact that all of its rooms are close together and near to the library. This enables teachers to successfully integrate the library into the work of the department.

97. **Drama**

21. In 1998, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examination was significantly below the national average. This was also the case in 1999. In both key stages, pupils' performance skills are variable. Their personal skills are more fully developed, particularly those of listening and speaking. The work they do in developing these skills makes a significant contribution to their attainment in these areas in English. In both key stages, pupils are articulate and able to express, both physically and verbally, their views and ideas. By the end of Key Stage 3 they are able to understand and sustain conventions such as mime, and to develop and sustain character. At Key Stage 4 they can develop their ideas through improvisation.

22. Pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages and they learn to work safely in the drama studio. They are enthusiastic about the subject and in lessons they work cooperatively with each other. As they move through the school they learn to work increasingly independently and develop a sound knowledge and understanding of aspects of theatre.

23. Almost all teaching is satisfactory or good. In the main, teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are planned effectively, ensuring that pupils develop their personal and performance skills. In the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching the teacher lacked subject knowledge. As a result, there was an over-reliance on the guidelines for the subject and the lessons were dull and pedestrian.

24. The department is administered in a satisfactory way. There is appropriate liaison with other departments involved in the teaching of drama. Detailed teaching schemes support the work of non-specialist teachers in Year 7. They are lacking, however, for the remainder of Key Stage 3. There are insufficient opportunities for the display of pupils' work.

101. **Mathematics**

25. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below average, both in the national tests and their associated teacher assessments, and below average in comparison with pupils from similar schools; there is often a significant discrepancy between teacher assessments and test scores. In the tests girls perform better than boys, but the difference is not as marked as that seen nationally. Since 1996, test results have improved at a faster rate than that seen nationally and there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels; in the 1999 tests, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels increased. Attainment levels in lessons are below average and generally better than Key Stage 3 test results would indicate. This is because of improvements in the arrangement of pupils into groups according to mathematical ability and the introduction of a new teaching scheme. By the end of the key stage most pupils competently generate and tabulate data, and they accurately interpret information presented to them in graphical and tabular form. They are familiar with the commoner geometrical shapes and their properties and most have a satisfactory repertoire of mathematical vocabulary. Pupils have a good grasp of measurement and understand the theorem of Pythagoras and use it to calculate the third side of a triangle. In algebra, they are competent in the manipulation of symbols and higher attaining pupils construct formulae and know the order for carrying out operations. For some pupils, including some higher attainers, arithmetical errors and carelessness sometimes inhibit success. The inappropriate use of calculators, indicated in the last inspection report, has been largely eradicated.

26. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average but has improved since the time of the last inspection. In 1998, the proportion of pupils who gained GCSE grades A*-G was in line with the national average, whilst the number of pupils who gained grades A*-C was below the national average. The results for 1999 were slightly worse than those for 1998. Results within the A*-C range have varied over the last three years, reflecting the variation in make-up of individual year groups, but the proportion of pupils who

gained within the A*-G range of grades has been consistently in line with national averages. Pupils generally do not do as well in mathematics when their results are compared with those in the other subjects they study. By the end of Key Stage 4, both higher and average attaining pupils confidently apply trigonometric ratios to finding the length of sides and size of angles in right-angled triangles. Higher attainers extend this knowledge to the application of the sine and cosine rules in non-right-angled triangles. As in Key Stage 3, many pupils' weaknesses in mental arithmetic, rather than a failure to understand the mathematics, sometimes lead to the production of incorrect or inaccurate answers.

27. Most pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. The content of lessons invariably has a structure that builds on previous learning, and consolidation is usually accompanied by the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Sound progress is made by higher and lower attaining pupils through the use of appropriate texts and exercises designed to meet individual pupils' needs. For example, higher attaining pupils enhance and develop their algebraic skills by translating problems expressed in words into equations and then answer questions by substituting given values into the equation. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs work on common topics with their peers and, through the provision of tasks matched to their attainment and individual help, generally make good progress. Concern expressed in the last report about the untidy presentation of work in exercise books remains an issue. Progress is sometimes impeded by untidy written work because it usually lacks structure and therefore fails to foster understanding and retention.

28. In Key Stage 4, pupils make at least satisfactory progress and in one-third of lessons their progress is very good. The attainment in mathematics of about three-quarters of the current group of Year 11 pupils was below national average standards at the end of Key Stage 2, but by the end of Key Stage 3 this proportion was reduced to under a half. Attainment in lessons indicates that this progress is being maintained. Their knowledge increases steadily and their skills develop through the provision of exercises that match the requirements of the different level GCSE courses. For example, a group of higher attaining pupils confidently extend their skills of geometric transformations to include reflection and rotation. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. This could be seen, for example, in a lesson where they worked alongside their peers, in small groups, to calculate the costs of alternative methods of advertising the sale of goods. Standards of written work are mostly satisfactory but, as in Key Stage 3, progress is sometimes inhibited by a lack of rigorous, systematic presentation.

29. In both key stages, pupils are very well motivated and they adopt a mature, positive and studious attitude to their work. Their conduct is rarely other than exemplary and they display a healthy regard and respect for the contribution of their peers in all the aspects of mathematics lessons. Levels of sustained concentration are generally high and the relationship between teachers and pupils is positive and characterised by cooperation and harmony.

30. Teaching in mathematics is always at least satisfactory. It is better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. It is very good in one-third of Key Stage 4 lessons and at least good in half of Key Stage 3 lessons. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have a good command of the subject, prepare lessons well and are concerned to improve the achievements of their pupils. In the best lessons, the teacher involves the pupils fully in the exposition, engenders a brisk pace, sets challenging and realistic tasks and regularly assesses the level of understanding of the pupils. For example, an average attaining group of Key Stage 4 pupils was actively involved with the teacher in providing an effective and practical illustration of the three separate measures of average. The teacher punctuated the lesson by ensuring that a wide range of pupils were involved at different stages, varied the activities, continually checked the progress of individuals, ensured that they worked at a good pace and made sure that those experiencing any difficulties were not left behind. In less successful lessons, the teacher does not fully involve the pupils during the process of exposition, misses opportunities to develop and share ideas and does not employ a variety of

strategies. For example, a group of Key Stage 3 pupils were passive as the teacher guided them through the work by reference to specified pages in the text book without ensuring any clear focus for discussion. Most teachers mark and assess pupils' work in accordance with the department's policies and procedures, but this is not always done consistently. The discrepancies between teacher assessments and test scores at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that teachers do not give sufficient priority to the day-to-day assessment of pupils' work.

31. Numerical proficiency across the curriculum ranges from weak to good throughout the key stages. In design and technology, pupils' measurement skills are satisfactory and when using graphics they show an understanding of shapes and measures. In geography, pupils can measure distances on maps and, using the given scale, accurately establish distances and areas. In a range of subjects, pupils demonstrate that they can make sense of information presented to them in graphical form, but they are less successful in constructing their own presentations of data. In science, pupils display a lack of confidence in their numeracy skills and sometimes fail to relate them to the subject's requirements. Most pupils cope satisfactorily with number and basic computational skills, but sometimes numeracy is inhibited by a lack of fluency with tables and hesitant mental arithmetic. At present, approaches to the development of numeracy skills, particularly those of mental arithmetic, are not sufficiently systematic and coordinated across the school.

108. **Science**

32. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. In the National Curriculum tests in 1998, the proportion of pupils at Key Stage 3 attaining level 5 was below the national average, as was the proportion attaining level 6. These results are also below the average for similar schools. The 1999 pattern of results was very similar to that of 1998, although girls are performing rather better than the boys are. However, this is an unusual pattern for the school as generally the results of boys and girls are comparable. Overall, the results at Key Stage 3 are below the average both by comparison with all schools and also with schools of a similar kind.

33. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average. In 1998, the results for the GCSE double award science examination were close to the national average. The 1999 results for this examination were similar to those for the previous year. In 1998 and in 1999, a few of the lower attaining pupils were entered for the single award GCSE science examination. The results from these examinations are well below the national average figures but reflect the levels of attainment of the pupils who were entered. The school has changed its policy and will no longer enter pupils for this examination. Since 1995 the school has shifted its emphasis from entering a majority of pupils for single award science examinations towards that of entering them for double award examinations. Bearing this in mind, since the last inspection, GCSE results have improved markedly. When their results are compared, pupils generally attain as well in science as they do in the other subjects they study.

34. At both key stages, pupils display a sound knowledge and understanding of scientific principles, and they have good practical skills. By the end of Key Stage 3, they are acquiring a sound understanding of forces and how they influence motion, and of their relevance to sports such as skiing, ice skating and motor racing. They are aware of the principles of separating the components of mixtures by paper chromatography and they understand that carbohydrates provide an important source of energy to humans and to animals. At Key Stage 4, pupils have an understanding of electromagnetic radiation and of the laws of reflection, and they are able to measure angles of incidence and of reflection for plane, concave and convex mirrors. They are

aware of ecological issues and how animals adapt to survive in a range of different environments.

35. At both key stages, higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of basic theoretical principles, and they are able to apply them in practical and in problem-solving contexts. The ability to understand and to apply quantitative data is confined to the highest attainers. Many find difficulty in transferring skills taught in mathematics to their practical application in science. Levels of literacy vary considerably, but overall they are generally satisfactory. Presentation of work is of a good standard, especially amongst higher attaining pupils. Pupils use information technology in all years. The quality of its application is good and imaginative, and the majority of pupils, in both key stages, understand it. The recording and presentation of data are generally good and, by the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can represent it graphically and interpret it to make scientific predictions.

36. The great majority of pupils at both key stages is making at least satisfactory progress, and for many progress is good. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and that of girls. In both key stages, pupils consolidate their scientific knowledge and understanding, and they acquire sound practical skills and techniques. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into classes and their progress is generally good.

37. Pupils are invariably polite, pleasant and compliant. Throughout the school, pupils are attentive and they have a good attitude to their work. Work is presented on time and pupils take pride in its appearance. The great majority of them shows a genuine interest in their lessons and they display considerable application. In a Year 10 lesson on current pathways, for example, pupils listened carefully to an introductory explanation by their teacher before breaking up into small groups to carry out experiments to investigate how series and parallel circuits brought about different readings on an ammeter. The manner in which they work together and record their findings displays not only an enthusiasm for the subject but good skills of cooperation. Behaviour throughout all lessons is exemplary, pupils invariably being courteous to their teachers.

38. Teaching is always satisfactory or better and in almost all lessons it is good in both key stages. All teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Lessons typically begin with an introduction and an explanation of the context before the pupils embark on a practical exercise in small groups. The teaching scheme is carefully planned and thoughtfully structured and helps teachers to prepare their lessons well and deliver them with enthusiasm. They are suitably paced and targeted appropriately to pupils' needs and to their respective levels of attainment. Discipline is good and classroom management is of a high order. The rapport between teachers and pupils is friendly and caring. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally high, although at Key Stage 4 the learning capacity of the higher attainers is not sufficiently stretched. Homework is set regularly and exercise books are marked routinely, the marking being accompanied by constructive and encouraging comments.

39. The department is very well managed and there is a good corporate spirit amongst the staff. The technicians provide competent support for the subject. The quality of the textbooks available to the pupils is good, but they are inadequate in number and there are also insufficient good quality reference books. Laboratory equipment is barely adequate. Much of it is old and in need of upgrading. For example, some of the power packs, which are frequently in use, are more than twenty-five years old. Electronic top-pan balances are required in each of the laboratories and none of the laboratories has a functioning fume cupboard. The department's computers are old and outmoded and access to the computer rooms is limited. This inhibits the use of information technology in science.

116. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

116. Art

40. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations, although standards have fallen since the last inspection. Many pupils make effective use of a wide range of materials in two and three-dimensions. A few pupils produce work of a high standard in drawing which exceeds national expectations. However, a few average and many lower attaining pupils have underdeveloped drawing skills because it is taught inconsistently. Many pupils use still-life observation and make reference to pictures successfully as a starting point for their projects. Some show an over-dependence on drawing and painting from magazine pictures. Younger pupils know about line, shape and texture and many draw objects with accurate proportions. This can be seen, for example, when they build up lines to interpret hair texture as they draw each other. The use of a soft pencil to develop tonal areas is less well understood. Pupils' skills in mixing and controlling paint are developing steadily and accurately, although there are shortcomings in the standards attained by Year 7 pupils because of limited resources. Many pupils can name artists and use artists' techniques in their work though most are less confident about placing artists in their historical context.

41. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is average. The 1998 GCSE examination results in art were below the national average for the proportion of pupils who obtained grades A*-C. Results in 1999 however, show a significant improvement, with the number of pupils attaining A*-C grades rising by a quarter. Girls perform better than boys do in art, however, there has been a significant improvement in boys' results in the past year. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection. Pupils studying art perform well at Key Stage 4 in comparison with their attainment in most other subjects in the school. Pupils explore a range of media and most develop successful planning and research skills in their sketchbooks. The majority of pupils work from observation, imagination and the study of artists' pictures, making bold detailed paintings with increasing visual accuracy. Older pupils can relate artists' styles and techniques to their own work with increasing confidence and knowledge. For example, a Year 11 pupil handled materials confidently when they produced a large panel using pastels showing an imaginative interpretation on the theme of Picasso's Guernica. Another mixed media relief based on Picasso's Weeping Woman shows a critical understanding of the content and meaning of the artist's ideas. Both pieces of work are of a high standard.

42. Pupils make satisfactory progress over time at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4. Pupils join Year 7 with a wide range of attainment and make steady progress in developing technical and expressive skills. They learn to use appropriate technical language in lessons and many learn to apply this with an increased awareness as they develop their use of vocabulary and their critical abilities in talking about the work of other artists. Most pupils consolidate their skills of planning and research in Year 9. These are effectively extended in Key Stage 4, where pupils use them to gain an understanding of artists' painting techniques. As a result, they make rapid progress. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils are given appropriate support and advice on how to improve through the teachers' explanations and demonstrations. They make good progress and this is sustained, leading to a good standard of attainment in the GCSE examination.

43. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Most listen carefully to instruction and work safely in the art studios. Pupils enjoy art and the majority is able to sustain concentration for long periods. Older pupils show initiative in organising equipment and preparing large scale boards for painting. However, younger pupils who are taught in classrooms have limited opportunity to take responsibility, work collaboratively and engage in group sessions where work is evaluated. In almost all lessons behaviour is good.

44. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory. It is better in Key Stage 4 where all of the teaching is good; in Key Stage 3 four lessons in every ten are good. Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are generally sound. Many explain artists' work and make effective use of a good range of pictures to motivate pupils. Relationships with pupils are good and this helps them to develop independent learning skills, particularly at Key Stage 4. Lesson planning is generally satisfactory, although provision is inconsistent for the day-to-day assessment of pupils of different levels of attainment at Key Stage 3. In the best lessons, teachers provide a good balance of purposeful and enjoyable activities for pupils, which help them improve their performance. They have high expectations and challenge pupils through thoughtful and effective questioning to check their understanding. Where teaching is less inspiring, particularly in the Year 7 combined studies programme, pupils lack challenge because the range of materials and resources available to explore ideas is limited. This is often because the teachers in this programme are not specialist art teachers and lack confidence in their knowledge of the subject. In a few lessons, evaluation sessions are brief and often do not involve the pupils. Homework is used effectively and appropriately linked to projects. Marking and feedback to pupils is inconsistent between teachers at Key Stage 3.

45. The management of the department has been disrupted by long-term illness. Departmental guidelines are generally sound although teaching schemes for Year 7 are vague and are insufficiently related to National Curriculum criteria. The procedures for assessment at Key Stage 3 are inadequate, particularly in Years 7 and 8. The results of assessment are not used sufficiently to inform the department's planning across the key stages. There are insufficient learning resources at Key Stage 3 to support the development of pupils' research and investigation skills. The use of accommodation for Year 7 pupils is inefficient because non-specialist art teachers choose not to use art rooms. Pupils' work is not sufficiently displayed alongside the work of related artists to help extend the higher attainers through a comparison of techniques. The numerous art displays around the school, however, enrich the environment.

122. **Design and technology**

46. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is broadly in line with the nationally expected level. In Key Stage 3, pupils' knowledge and understanding is promoted by a series of five short modules. By the end of the key stage pupils can use a wide range of tools and machines with safety and with increasing confidence. They can use a design brief to guide their thinking and develop a specification for a product, giving sound consideration to its purpose and function. They take into account the characteristics of an extensive range of materials when making the product. They can evaluate their products and make any necessary refinements. For example, in Year 9, pupils set the task of making an electrical product use well-developed computer skills to draw an electrical circuit. They can identify electronic components from the computer menu and they know how to incorporate a buzzer and vary the input and output to make it emit sound.

47. Attainment is below average at the end of Key Stage 4. The results of the GCSE examination in 1998 were below the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C. Pupils generally do not do as well in design and technology when their results are compared with those in the other subjects they study. There are considerable variations within the different aspects of the subject, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. There is evidence to show that attainment is beginning to rise within each of the aspects of the subject because a new course has been introduced at Key Stage 3 and teachers have begun to set pupils targets for their attainment at both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have increased knowledge of and skills in the designing and making processes. However, standards are uneven between the different aspects of the subject. Attainment in the aspects that concern materials is weaker than that in graphics, and systems and control. This has the effect of lowering attainment for the subject as a whole. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to work with some independence. and produce a design and make project for the

GCSE examination. They can use tools and materials appropriately for this purpose. However, too few pupils in Years 10 and 11 produce project work of sufficiently high quality to gain higher grades in the examination. This can be seen clearly, for example, in Year 11 textiles project work which shows serious gaps in pupils' knowledge of fibres, fabrics and sewing processes.

48. A scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that they make better progress over time in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, progress is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 4 about half of the pupils make satisfactory progress while the remainder make unsatisfactory or poor progress and thus overall progress is unsatisfactory. The new teaching scheme, which has been introduced in Key Stage 3, is helping to ensure that pupils make better progress. At Key Stage 4, many pupils have gaps in their knowledge as a result of their experiences in Key Stage 3, and this limits their progress. Pupils with special educational needs make mostly satisfactory progress except in a few instances when the department has failed to request additional support for help in practical lessons.

49. Pupils have good attitudes to their work. They are reliable and well behaved. Most are conscientious and are capable of working collaboratively with others. They make good use of extra-curricular activities, for example, through taking part in the wood-turning club run by the technician.

50. Teaching is of a similar standard in both key stages. Most lessons are satisfactory but one in four is unsatisfactory and a small number are poor. Teachers have a good knowledge of the specialist aspect they teach. However, many experience difficulties in teaching the key subject knowledge and skills associated with designing and evaluating. Few are able to work across a range of aspects. Planning has improved considerably, especially with the introduction of the new Key Stage 3 course. At times the pace of lessons slackens, usually in the long two-hour sessions at Key Stage 3. Teachers do not routinely set pupils a target for the time they should take for the completion of a task. A significant weakness in a number of lessons is the failure of teachers to challenge pupils sufficiently, and this is a major reason for unsatisfactory progress and attainment. The marking of pupils' work is generally consistent and the new assessment sheets devised by the department are a good basis for tracking pupils' progress.

51. The new head of department is providing sound leadership. He has introduced a new curriculum and improved assessment practices. The accommodation does not present pupils with a positive image of an important modern subject. Much equipment and furniture in graphics, food and textiles is worn and old fashioned. Benches are old and worn, and all but one room is in need of refurbishment. The books for research and investigation are limited and out-dated and many are not applicable to the National Curriculum, particularly in food and textiles. The computer facilities are generally well used. Teachers in resistant materials do not pay sufficient attention to matters of health and safety.

128. **Geography**

52. Attainment is just below nationally expected levels at the end of Key Stage 3. By the end of the key stage pupils have a sound grounding in geographical skills and vocabulary and a satisfactory understanding of environmental issues. Knowledge of place is good but graphical presentation of statistics is a weakness.

53. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in 1998 was considerably below the national average. In 1999 there was a very slight improvement in the results, although the numbers entered for the examinations were low. Pupils generally do not do as well in geography when their results are compared with those in the other subjects they study. No students study geography in Year 11. Year 10 pupils had just only just started the Key Stage 4 course at time of the inspection. As a result, it is not possible to comment on the standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 from direct observation. On the evidence of

recent years' examination results it is well below average at the end of Key Stage 4. The teaching scheme indicates that, by the end of the key stage, pupils have gained important knowledge and understanding of social and cultural issues through studies of Brazil and Japan.

54. Most pupils have made satisfactory progress by the end of Key Stage 3. This is largely due to the highly structured teaching, the support given by staff and the general interest shown by pupils. At Key Stage 3, low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress when learning assistants are available to help in lessons. At other times their progress is satisfactory. However, in some classes the materials used are unsuitable. In addition, the activities teachers plan for these pupils cannot be completed in the time available. Higher attaining pupils are generally suitably challenged by extension exercises at Key

Stage 3. In lessons, pupils are making sound progress in Key Stage 4. There was, however, insufficient evidence available during the inspection to assess pupils' progress at the end of Key Stage 4.

55. Pupils' attitude to learning is positive. Most concentrate well, are attentive in class and work conscientiously, often with real interest and enjoyment. Behaviour is always satisfactory and mostly good. Pupils form constructive relationships with their teachers and relate very well indeed to each other. They are pleasant and courteous. Pupils can be trusted to assume responsibility and to work hard when undertaking individual or group investigations.

56. At both key stages, the teaching observed was at least satisfactory, and about four lessons in ten were good. Teachers have a high level of commitment, and show care and support for their pupils. They manage them well in class, including those who are potentially troublesome. The best teaching has clear aims that are shared with pupils. Planning is detailed, teaching takes place at good pace and uses practical activities effectively. For example, in a lesson concerned with teaching types of weathering the use of chemical testing of rocks to demonstrate these processes greatly interested pupils. Teaching is mainly well directed but at times it is too prescriptive and this constrains pupils' opportunities for their own individual enquiry and, as a result, inhibits their learning. At times, teachers do not provide sufficient consolidation and re-enforcement of the main teaching points. There is also insufficient use of visual material including video, fieldwork and display maps to create an incentive for pupils' learning. Written work in some classes is not demanding enough. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is generally satisfactory. The best marking provides advice for pupils in terms of improving their work and helps to improve standards and aid their progress. The assessment of pupils' work is sound but the process of setting targets does not yet include opportunities for pupils to compare their own self-evaluation with that of the teachers' assessment. This is an important part of the process of raising pupils' expectations and standards.

57. The head of department is an experienced administrator but the department's teaching in Key Stage 3 has not encouraged sufficient numbers of pupils to choose to study the subject at Key Stage 4. He monitors the work of the department but there has been no recent evaluation of teaching. Pupils undertake fieldwork in the local area in Year 7 and for project work at Key Stage 4. This greatly enriches the curriculum and the best is of commendable quality. Overall, however, there is insufficient fieldwork and this does not extend to include a study of an environment outside the local area by the end of Key Stage 3. At present, the department does not have a structured programme for developing pupils' field skills. Progress has been made in integrating the use of information technology in geography since the last inspection. However, there is not a programme to ensure the progressive development of skills over both key stages.

58. Staff development within the subject has not ensured that all specialist teachers have been given regular training on new ideas and methods. The specialist teaching rooms provide a good learning environment for pupils. The resources for learning are unsatisfactory. For example, there is a shortage of textbooks in Year 8, video facilities in the second specialist

room, large-scale world or regional maps in both main teaching rooms and sufficient sums of money for pupils to undertake fieldwork.

135.

135. **History**

59. Attainment during the inspection at Key Stage 3 was broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected level 5 and above in the National Curriculum assessments made by teachers in 1998 was average. Girls achieve at a slightly higher level than the boys do, although the difference is less than that seen nationally. This is an improvement on the situation reported at the time of the last inspection. Levels in teacher assessments for 1999 are markedly better and indicate that the performances of both boys and girls have improved. By the end of Key Stage 3, nearly all pupils have a basic understanding of change and continuity and a sound historical knowledge. Pupils can select, record and use evidence from different sources. This was demonstrated, for example, when Year 9 pupils gathered information to describe life in First World War trenches. Most pupils know the differences between primary and secondary sources and by Year 9 can recognise bias and reliability. They have developed sound research and organisational skills, which have been promoted through regular project work. Higher attainers in Years 8 and 9 produce effective extended writing, often demonstrating empathy. For example, Year 8 pupils wrote imaginatively and accurately in their reports on a slave trading company. Higher attaining pupils are occasionally able to critically evaluate causes, sources and interpretations of events. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs produce simple pieces of narrative writing and make satisfactory notes using appropriately designed materials to help them.

60. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C at GCSE in 1998 was well above the national average and those attaining A*-G in line with those nationally. Boys and girls performed equally well. There has been a significant improvement over the last three years, especially in the performance of girls, which was a concern at the time of the last inspection. GCSE results for 1999 are broadly similar to those for 1998 and the girls' performance has continued to improve. Some of the higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are entered for a Classical Civilisation GCSE examination. This is two years earlier than is the norm. In 1998 these pupils achieved commendable success; half of them attained grades A*-G and nearly a third of them grades A*-C. Results

for 1999 show a marked improvement; all pupils attained at least a grade A*-G and nearly a half of them achieving grades A*-C. In Years 10 and 11 these pupils study for the A/S level examination in classical civilisation and they have achieved good results over the last few years. Pupils generally do well in history when their results are compared with those in the other subjects they study. At Key Stage 4, most pupils have a good knowledge of the main features of the periods they study and understand change and chronology. They demonstrate the good development of their skills in research and organisation in their in-depth studies of crime and punishment. Most are also able to evaluate sources for bias and reliability, for example, in their study of Hitler's Munich putsch. They can also produce well-structured and carefully argued pieces of extended writing in a variety of forms, often showing an empathy with the participants in events and a maturity of style.

61. At Key Stage 3, pupils' progress is good. When pupils join the school their attainment is below average. They make good progress over time to achieve at average levels by the end of the key stage. During lessons progress is nearly always at least satisfactory and often is good. This is an improvement on the situation reported at the time of the last inspection. Almost all pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of sources and change, and a gain good knowledge of history. Most learn that there is more than one reason for events. Their understanding of different types of causes and their interpretation of these is less well developed. They develop skills of selecting and deploying relevant evidence. Lower attainers and those pupils with special educational needs also make good progress in writing notes and

in handling simple sources of evidence. This is due to work that is well planned to meet their needs and the effective help provided by learning support teachers.

62. At Key Stage 4, pupils' progress is good. Their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 improves still further by the end of Key Stage 4. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to continue to develop their skills in research and organisation through topics such as crime and punishment and the American west. They develop their ability to engage in extended writing of appropriate length and relevance. Higher attainers develop a mature level of thinking through being encouraged to think for themselves, and produce balanced answers to important questions. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs have learned to select and record evidence from different sources. Nearly all pupils have learned to evaluate sources satisfactorily, though their ability to analyse causes and interpretations critically is less well developed.

63. Pupils' attitudes to work throughout the school are good in nearly all the lessons and are only very rarely unsatisfactory. They are best at Key Stage 4 where they are frequently very good. The development of these attitudes in pupils reflects the quality of teaching in the department and is consistent with the situation reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils listen attentively, settle quickly and concentrate well for the whole lesson. They take a pride in their work and only rarely is it left uncompleted. Behaviour is good and pupils relate well to their teachers. They are able to work collaboratively and show respect for each other's views and feelings. Nearly all pupils can work independently, especially at Key Stage 4 where they have a very mature attitude to independent study. Pupils, including those with lower attainment and those with special educational needs, strive hard with difficult tasks.

64. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is nearly always at least satisfactory. It is good in half the lessons but on occasion is unsatisfactory. Teaching is better at Key Stage 4 where it is all good. The quality of teaching has improved at Key Stage 3 since the time of the last inspection and this has had an important impact on raising the level of attainment there. Teachers are mostly well qualified. The non-specialist teachers in the Year 7 combined studies course have a sound knowledge of the subject and most of the key skills that need to be developed. However, their understanding of the analytical skills to be learned by higher attaining pupils is not so well developed. Consequently, these pupils are not always adequately challenged. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives that are understood by pupils. A wider variety of teaching strategies is now being deployed. These include individual enquiry by pupils, the use of role-play situations, the evaluation of sources of evidence and extended writing in various forms. Careful consideration is given to matching the materials to the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, especially in

Year 7 in their work on the Norman conquest. Classroom management and control are very good. Standards of discipline are high and teachers have good relationships with their pupils. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4 are being effectively challenged to think more analytically. Homework is set and marked regularly. Marking at Key Stage 3 is not consistently rigorous. It does not provide pupils with detailed comments on their progress and provide them with targets for improvement.

65. The concerns about the history curriculum expressed in the last inspection report have now been addressed. The teaching time allocated to the subject in Year 9 is now above the recommended level and the content of the combined studies course now meets statutory requirements. The curriculum overall also meets these requirements, although the time allotted to the study of a non-European society is minimal. The department is well led and managed efficiently. Some of the rooms are too small to allow some aspects of the subject to be dealt with effectively. The learning resources deployed to meet the needs of lower attainers and those with special educational needs have been improved. The teaching schemes have been revised. They now identify points in the course where assessment should be made. However, they do not clearly demonstrate what should be achieved at the full range of

National Curriculum attainment levels, nor adequately map out the development history skills. The department follows the school's assessment policy, but its procedures are not fully developed at Key Stage 3. Regular assessments target the key elements and skills; the results are moderated and levelled. The results of assessment are not used effectively to inform teaching or changes that might need to be made to curriculum plans. Pupils are not being adequately or regularly informed of their progress in terms of the development of their skills. Individual targets are set for pupils in Key Stage 4 but this is not the case at Key Stage 3. Teaching has not been monitored sufficiently frequently. A good programme of visits outside the school provides a useful learning resource and a valuable cultural experience for pupils.

142. **Information technology**

66. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above average. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are promoted by a series of short teaching modules designed to ensure they develop the appropriate key skills. Pupils can manipulate text using a wide range of tools. They can change its layout, use a spellchecker, add clip-art and bullet points, and create shading and shadow effects. Many pupils can extend their manipulation of text further by using a desktop publishing application. They can use draw applications and change the sizes of the images that they create. They can re-position them, print them in different alignments and produce three-dimensional effects. They have a good knowledge of databases and can use spreadsheets to enter data and manipulate it with simple formulae. They can search for information using a range of electronic facilities.

67. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is below average. At Key Stage 3 the subject is taught to all pupils but at Key Stage 4 it is taught only to those pupils who choose to follow an examination course. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment for pupils entered for GCSE examinations are good. The results in 1998 were very high and well above the national average. Almost all pupils gained a grade A*-C and the few others who were entered attained a D grade. This high standard was maintained in 1999. Pupils who follow examination courses in information technology attain much better results than they do in the other subjects they study. These pupils have increased their skills in using a good range of software applications. They have developed a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. However, many pupils do not choose to follow examination courses at Key Stage 4. These pupils do not follow the Programme of Study for the National Curriculum. They are not taught information technology regularly nor do they use computers effectively across the subjects of the curriculum. As a result, their attainment is below the nationally expected level. Since the time of the last inspection, attainment has risen considerably for pupils at Key Stage 3 and for those taking examinations; it has declined for the remainder.

68. Progress during Key Stage 3 is good. Sound liaison arrangements with primary schools help to create a smooth transition to secondary school and ensure there is good progress between Key Stages 2 and 3. Pupils gain new skills and apply them successfully to a wide range of problems, for example, when they use their knowledge of word processing and data analysis to search for information. At Key Stage 4, progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils who do not have regular access to computers are unable to consolidate and extend their competence. For those pupils following the examination courses, progress is good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the taught courses at both key stages. This is not the case for those at Key Stage 4 who are not part of an examination class.

69. Pupils have good attitudes to their work. They are highly motivated by using computers and they persevere with the tasks they are given. Behaviour is good. They work well in groups, sharing and cooperating with each other appropriately. As they move through the school they work with increasing independence and confidence.

70. Teaching by specialist teachers is mainly good, sometimes very good but on occasion is unsatisfactory. Teachers who teach the formally timetabled courses have good subject knowledge and high expectations of what pupils should achieve. Lesson planning is of a high quality and teachers manage both time and resources well. At times teachers do not build sufficiently upon the knowledge pupils bring from using computers at home. The technical support staff are very competent and they make a positive contribution to pupils' overall good progress. However, the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are not taught to all pupils and, in addition, computers are not used effectively across the subjects of the curriculum. Assessment procedures are manageable and thorough and teachers keep pupils well informed about their progress through the targets that they set them. Homework is used well to develop purposefully work begun in class. However, there are weaknesses in teaching across the whole school. This is largely a result of lack of subject knowledge on the part of a number of teachers. As a result, many subject teachers do not ensure that pupils use to computers in their subject at Key Stage 4 to extend and develop their skills.

71. The department is effectively led. Hardware, software and peripherals have been well chosen and the school network is managed efficiently. Data storage and the associated security is of a high order and this is a credit to the department staff. The lack of portable computers restricts pupils' access to aspects of data-logging and research in the field. Too little time is allocated to the subject in Year 7 and consequently progress is not as good as it in Years 8 and 9. At Key Stage 4, many subjects do not assume any responsibility for teaching those features of information technology which relate to their subject. They fail to make information technology a regular feature of departmental meetings and do not have systems to monitor and evaluate how standards improve over time. The school does not have a long-term financial plan that demonstrates how it will continue keep abreast of changes in the technology.

148. **Modern foreign languages**

72. The school's policy is for French and German to be studied by pupils as their modern foreign language by alternate year groups. This has not always been possible because of staffing difficulties. Thus at present, Years 7 and 11 study German and Years 8, 9 and 10 study French. Small numbers of pupils in Key Stage 4 choose to learn a second language after school and at lunchtime.

73. Pupils' attainment in French at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. They can answer simple questions about, for example, their families and where they live, but the majority cannot develop a conversation giving the level of detail expected. Higher attaining pupils can read and understand passages of French that express opinions, but the majority of average and lower attaining pupils can read and understand only single words or short sentences. Pupils can generally understand their teachers when they use the language they are learning for giving instructions in the classroom. Almost all pupils can copy sentences accurately and most can write simple sentences for themselves. Many pupils have learned and can write sentences about events in the past or future, but their level of accuracy at times makes communication difficult.

74. Attainment at Key Stage 4 over the last 3 years has generally been well below average. Evidence from lessons and pupils' work indicates that this is still the case. In the GCSE examination in 1998, half of the pupils in the year group were entered for French and half for German. The number of pupils gaining grades A*-C was just below the national average in French and in line with it in German. In 1999, when all pupils studied French, results fell considerably. The results of the small group of pupils who also learned German, outside lesson time, were good. Almost all gained higher grades, but the small numbers involved make comparisons with national averages impossible. Overall, the results of boys are lower than those of girls by more than the national average. Pupils generally do not do as well in modern languages when their results are compared with those in the other subjects they

study. At the time of the last inspection results were also well below the national average. By the end of the key stage, pupils' skills in speaking have improved. They have practised and extended their answers to general questions and can take part in simple role-play exercises. Higher attaining pupils can read and understand longer passages of more complex language. Many average and lower attaining pupils understand signs and simple notices but find reading longer passages difficult. The majority of pupils can understand short dialogues in French, but have difficulty understanding longer ones when they are spoken at near normal speed. Writing is a weakness generally. Only the highest attaining pupils can write letters or narratives dealing with past or future events with the accuracy required for higher grades at GCSE.

75. Progress is unsatisfactory at both key stages. All but the highest attaining pupils have problems remembering language they have previously been taught. One important cause of this is the lack of continuity resulting from staff absence and frequent staff changes in recent years. The time allowed for teaching languages is low in comparison with other schools and this also limits progress. Year 8 pupils are taught in groups containing pupils of a wide range of attainment. Work in these classes is not sufficiently well matched to the differing needs of pupils with the result that higher attainers are not adequately stretched nor are lower attainers effectively supported. In Years 7 and 8 in particular, the curriculum covers too wide a range of language so that pupils have insufficient time to practise newly presented material before moving on to the next topic.

76. Pupils with special educational needs generally make progress in line with that of their peers. In some lessons, where teachers are well aware of their needs and adapt the work for them, they make good progress. In recent years some pupils with special educational needs have achieved some success at GCSE.

77. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They are usually willing to join in oral work. They concentrate well, are polite and have good relationships with their teachers. They show respect for their teachers and each other and work well together when required to do so. In some lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to develop the ability to work more independently through the use of dictionaries and revision aids. Their interest varies. The staffing problems referred to above have had a negative effect on some pupils' levels of interest, but they also depend on the teaching methods employed in the lessons. Pupils show more interest when the teacher has realistic expectations and takes care to involve them in activities which they enjoy and are relevant to them.

78. Teaching is at least satisfactory in around three-quarters of lessons. In Key Stage 3, a third of lessons was good but a third was unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 4, two lessons in every ten were unsatisfactory. All teachers have a good knowledge of French. Some teachers' knowledge of German is weaker. This is demonstrated by poor pronunciation, restricted use of the language in the classroom and some important mistakes in key phrases which pupils need to use. Although in some lessons teachers make good use of French or German for instructions and explanations in the classroom, this practice is not sufficiently widespread. Planning of lessons is generally sound. Management of pupils is always satisfactory, and is at times very good. Discipline is good in all lessons. In most lessons there is a good variety of activities using a range of skills. At times, however, pupils are given insufficient opportunity to practise new language thoroughly before being expected to use it independently. In some lessons teachers use resources such as tapes and videos well to allow pupils to hear a range of voices speaking the language. Pupils are assessed regularly but teachers do not always make sufficient use of these assessments to identify pupils' weaknesses when planning future lessons. Teachers generally set homework to reinforce the work done in lessons, but at times their expectations are too high and homework is not sufficiently well prepared in class.

79.The head of department provides strong leadership for the department and there are sound systems to monitor teaching and learning. Accommodation for teaching languages is good and good use is made of display, both of materials to support pupils' learning and of pupils' work. Resources are sufficient for all pupils to use a textbook in class but insufficient for pupils to take books home for homework. This is a particularly unsatisfactory situation in Key Stage 4.

156. **Music**

80.Standards of attainment in music at Key Stage 3 are in line with nationally expected levels. Pupils in Year 9 play simple phrases in staff notation with satisfactory fluency and technique. They experiment confidently and know that by selecting and combining sounds they can create different moods and effects. Most are prepared to refine their ideas to produce compositions with which they are satisfied. They listen well to each other's performances and to extracts of other music. However, there are insufficient opportunities provided for discussion and they do not develop confidence in using technical or appropriate descriptive language. Younger pupils sing enthusiastically but the tone quality is unsatisfactory.

81.Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are very good. The results of the GCSE examination are consistently well above the national average and include a very high proportion of A* grades. Pupils generally do much better in music when their results are compared with those in the other subjects they study. In Key Stage 4, pupils are particularly successful in composing. Pupils of higher attainment work in a variety of styles and produce extended, clearly structured imaginative pieces. Pupils of average attainment employ clear guidelines to compose musically logical pieces. Performing standards vary according to individual abilities and experience but most pupils perform at a satisfactory level. Higher attaining pupils play a moderately demanding repertoire accurately but with limited interpretation and style. Listening skills are good. Standards of attainment have been well maintained at the level prevalent at the last inspection.

82.Progress is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Although pupils enter the school with a limited experience of music, they quickly acquire a good sense of rhythm and learn to coordinate their reading and playing skills and to develop their musical memory. They become steadily more confident in applying their understanding of musical form when composing, and a small number of pupils of higher attainment produces increasingly imaginative pieces. In Key Stage 4, pupils readily build in their earlier experience. As they move through the key stage, pupils organise their ideas well and confidently employ the techniques for composing which they have learned. For example, one pupil of otherwise average attainment in Year 10 spontaneously composed a melody which had memorable features and in Year 11 a pupil with learning difficulties composed a piece in ternary form. Skills in performing improve steadily but few pupils make outstanding progress in this area. At both key stages and in all aspects pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

83.Pupils have positive attitudes to their lessons. They settle quickly to practical tasks, handling equipment with care and controlling noise well. They co-operate willingly with one another and readily support each other to complete their work effectively. When they are required to work independently, most pupils act responsibly and use time well. They express themselves courteously and willingly discuss their ideas.

84.The quality of teaching in both key stages is good and in Key Stage 3 very good teaching was observed in around half the lessons. This represents an improvement from the good situation found during the last inspection. Lessons are well planned and their content is appropriate to pupils' ages and abilities. The resources available are good and they are used effectively. Teachers have a wide range of musical experience and communicate their own enthusiasm most effectively. This could be seen, for example, in a lesson with a class in Year 7, where, by contrasting hand claps and finger taps, pupils were helped to understand

the importance of careful listening. Similarly, in a Year 11 lesson, skilful questioning ensured that pupils gained confidence in their aural skills. Pupils are expected to work independently, to experiment, to make decisions and to work to the limits of their ability. Pupils of lower attainment are given appropriate support, and extension tasks are provided for pupils of higher attainment. Homework is regularly used to reinforce and extend work done in class and is conscientiously marked. Assessment procedures are detailed and the department is aware that in Key Stage 3 these need refining further so that pupils will know how they can improve their attainment.

85.The department's policy sets out clear aims for the subject and these are fulfilled well. Accommodation for music is satisfactory, except when two large classes occupy the area at the same time. The lack of sufficient separate spaces for group work available at these times has an adverse effect on standards. It limits the rate at which pupils can work and the level of discrimination and sensitivity they are able to develop. Because of constraints on space, pupils often have to use headphones, and opportunities for discussion are limited. Around eighty pupils have instrumental lessons and take part in instrumental ensembles. The department's good resources include a well-equipped recording studio, and significant numbers of pupils of all ages take advantage of opportunities to learn about recording techniques. Concerts are held regularly and small groups attend professional performances. Local opportunities for the enrichment of pupils' aesthetic experience are limited. The department is aware of the need to provide as much enhancement of these experiences as possible in order to ensure that pupils are fully prepared for the challenges of the next stage of their education.

162. **Physical education**

86.At Key Stage 3, attainment is at least in line with national expectations, with many pupils achieving levels of performance that exceed this. In games activities, pupils have an emerging knowledge of rules and conventions, and they are developing appropriate skills to enable them to compete successfully. In gymnastics, pupils' skills in body management are developing and most are able to demonstrate effective planning in their positioning, anticipation and structure of sequences of movements.

87.The attainment of pupils in the general whole-school programme for physical education at Key Stage 4 is above the national expectation. In addition, some pupils follow a course that leads to the GCSE examination. In 1998, the proportion of pupils that gained grades A*-C was just below the national average. However, the 1999 results show a significant improvement with a much higher proportion of pupils gaining these higher grades. When their results are compared, pupils generally attain as well in physical education as they do in the other subjects they study. Pupils have good levels of skills in a wide variety of activities, particularly in netball, rugby, football, hockey and basketball. In health-related education, pupils have a good level of knowledge and understanding of fitness and how to attain it. They are able to maintain levels of activity for appropriate periods of time. Although pupils with special educational needs receive no additional help in physical education lessons, they are well integrated, are given much support and encouragement by both the teaching staff and fellow pupils, and reach a satisfactory level of attainment. Many teams take part in many inter-school competitions, and gain much success. A large number of pupils has been selected to represent Essex and some have gone on to represent the Southern Counties and to compete in national championships.

88.Most pupils throughout the school, including those with special needs, are making good progress. Across both key stages they develop their knowledge and their performance in a range of skills. They learn about the general application of the rules of play and to cooperate increasingly effectively with others in their group. Their knowledge and use of technical terms and language are extended effectively through each unit of work. In the examination groups, pupils learn to produce coursework files which are detailed and generally well presented.

89. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards physical education, both in their lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Their response to the general activities and to the tasks set in lessons is good. In these situations, their enjoyment of their lessons is clearly evident. Behaviour and discipline are also good and pupils are able to work productively together in pairs and groups. Pupils relate very well to their teachers and to each other.

90. Teaching is always at least satisfactory at both key stages. A very high proportion of lessons is good at both key stages and, in Key Stage 3 almost four lessons in every ten are very good. Teachers in the department have a good command of their subject and activities relating to it. Lessons are well-planned, the content is appropriate and the use of relevant resources is well organised. Practical work is purposeful and vigorous. Teachers expect that pupils will be well behaved, work hard and achieve at least a satisfactory level of performance. The quality of teaching has a positive impact on the attainment of the pupils and on their enjoyment of the subject.

91. In line with the recommendations made by the last inspection report, the curriculum time for Key Stage 4 pupils has been increased. The curriculum has been reviewed. It is now balanced and covers the statutory requirements. New procedures for assessing and recording pupils' achievements have been introduced and these are now in line with the statutory requirements and the school's policy. A good system for monitoring the quality of pupils' work has been developed.

92. Strong leadership, clear direction and a positive ethos characterise the management of the subject. The staff who teach physical education work well together, support each other and show a very strong commitment to the pupils. Many teachers, including some non-specialists, give very freely of their time to provide a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are taken up by large numbers of enthusiastic pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to go on skiing holidays in Europe and to be involved in outdoor pursuits activities in the Lake District. Groups from the school attend international sports fixtures and there are soccer tours to Holland and rugby football tours to Wales.

93. The well-maintained playing fields, sports hall, fitness room, gymnasium and playground areas are good and have a positive effect on pupils' attainment.

170. **Religious education**

94. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have an understanding of the Christian faith and of major world religions. They know how to look beyond the surface of a symbol, to the underlying meaning. They can reflect on religious faiths and practices in developing their own beliefs and values. In discussion, most pupils can confidently apply these to real life situations. Higher attaining pupils develop this aspect in more detail in writing than average and lower attaining pupils.

95. Attainment in Key Stage 4 is above that expected by the agreed syllabus. Almost all pupils follow a short course for the GCSE examination in religious education. In 1998, the proportion of pupils who attained grades A*-C was average. This is a notable achievement given that the majority of the year group is entered for the examination. In 1999 the results improved slightly. When their results are compared, pupils generally attain as well in religious education as they do in the other subjects they study. Pupils have a more extensive knowledge of religious beliefs and practices. They have a sympathetic understanding of the faiths of others. They can reflect on their own beliefs. They grapple with notions of how faith is expressed in action and with the effect that religious insights have on their views of the world, for example, dealing with suffering and care of the environment.

96. Progress throughout Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils become increasingly secure in handling factual material and many are able to recall information confidently and relate it to religious beliefs. In each year group, pupils not only answer, but ask probing questions. In Year 7, after only two weeks in the school, a pupil was able to ask why and how beauty and meaning could be lost in translating the Qur'an from Arabic into English. Higher attaining pupils not only make gains in their knowledge of religion and explaining stories, events and significance, but also in reflective and imaginative contributions. The progress of average and lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory overall. It is better in speaking and listening but as not as good in writing, where there is insufficient emphasis on developing this skill for those pupils who have difficulties.

97. Progress at Key Stage 4 is good overall. Pupils learn to use their knowledge and understanding to consider the implications of faith for a person's life, and the impact of this on wider society. Good reflective activities help them to consolidate and extend their perceptions. This could be seen clearly at the end of a Year 10 lesson about man's responsibility for the environment. In this, the whole class became completely absorbed in the ideas expressed in a quotation from a Red Indian chief who said that the value of land was not measured by money, but by the tribe's stewardship of that land. Pupils, especially those with higher attainment, learn to make and express evaluations of the ideas and themes they are studying. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress.

98. Throughout the school, pupils respond positively to religious education and participate actively in lessons. They are well behaved and collaborate well with each other. They listen attentively to the teacher and to other pupils. Their positive responses to the challenges of the subject have a marked effect on standards.

99. Teaching is always at least satisfactory at both key stages. A very high proportion of lessons is good in Key Stage 3 and almost two lessons in every ten are very good. At Key Stage 4, all lessons are good and a third of them is very good. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well planned so that learning takes place in a disciplined and stimulating environment. A range of activities is provided for each lesson to ensure that learning is promoted and pupils are challenged. The time and resources available for lessons are well used. Teaching is particularly good when it emphasises a search for meaning and demands a personal response from pupils. Where lessons are weaker, insufficient opportunity has been provided or time allowed for worthwhile written tasks.

100. Leadership of the department is characterised by enthusiasm and commitment. The head of department is well supported by teachers who work together effectively as a team and this has a positive impact on standards. The arrangements for the assessment and the marking of pupil's work are satisfactory. Religious education makes a distinctive and important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In particular, it promotes in pupils sensitivity towards and an understanding of others. There has been good progress since the last inspection. The agreed syllabus is now used appropriately across the school, a GCSE short course has been introduced and attainment has improved.

177. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

177. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

101. The inspection team consisted of 13 inspectors, including a lay inspector. During the week 149 lessons, 22 registration sessions, year group assemblies and a range of extra-curricular activities were inspected. Teachers were seen teaching several times. Planned discussions were held with pupils, teachers, other members of staff and governors. Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils, including a sample across the range of pupils' attainment from each year group. A large amount of documentation, including teachers' planning, provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. The registered inspector held a meeting attended by 21 parents shortly before the inspection, and analysed 176 responses to a questionnaire about their opinions, distributed by the school.

102. Inspectors spent a total of 47 inspector days in school gathering first hand evidence. They spent 136 hours observing lessons, two and a half hours talking formally to pupils and 23 hours in evaluating pupils' work.

103.DATA AND INDICATORS

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 – Y11	772	15	115	152

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	37.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.8

Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked each week	486

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	77
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	24
	KS4	19

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
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	£
Total Income	2 091 019
Total Expenditure	2 059 682
Expenditure per pupil	2 795
Balance brought forward from previous year	120 532
Balance carried forward to next year	151 869

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

750

Number of questionnaires returned:

176

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	22	65	8	5	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	37	56	3	3	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	25	52	16	7	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	22	64	10	3	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	31	57	8	4	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	39	56	2	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	30	62	4	3	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	24	60	6	9	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	32	55	7	5	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	32	59	5	4	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	37	53	8	2	0