

INSPECTION REPORT

THE ARNEWOOD SCHOOL

NEW MILTON

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116495

Headteacher: Mr C Hummerstone

Reporting inspector: Mrs Jean Head

1604

Dates of inspection: 14-18 February 2000

Inspection number: 185522

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| School category: | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 - 18 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Gore Road New Milton Hampshire |
| Postcode: | BH25 6RS |
| Telephone number: | 01425 610186 |
| Fax number: | 01425 612036/628723 |
| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs E Cook |
| Date of previous inspection: | 2-6 October 1995 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jean Head | Registered inspector | | What sort of school is it? |
| | | | The school's results and achievements |
| | | | How well are pupils taught? |
| | | | How well is the school led and managed? |
| | | | What should the school do to improve further? |
| John Edmond | Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development |
| | | | How well does the school care for its pupils? |
| | | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| Andrew Bennett | Team inspector | English | |
| John Hardy | Team inspector | Business Education GNVQ | |
| Lynn Jenkins | Team inspector | Religious Education | SMSC |
| Ian Kirby | Team inspector | Music | Accommodation |
| Edward Little | Team inspector | Science | |
| Stephanie Matthews | Team inspector | History | |
| Roger Moyle | Team inspector | Physical education | |
| Jennifer Murray | Team inspector | Special educational needs Equal opportunities | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? Community links |
| Malcolm Padmore | Team inspector | Design and technology | |
| | | Information technology | |
| Janet Simms | Team inspector | Art | |
| Ian Waters | Team inspector | Modern languages | Resources for learning |
| Hamish Wilkie | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| Vernon Williams | Team inspector | Geography | Staffing |

The inspection contractor was:

Chapel House Inspection Unit Ltd

The Old Chapel House
Pound Hill
ALRESFORD
Hampshire
SO24 9BW

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The Registrar
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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Arnewood School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. With 1470 pupils on roll, it is much larger than many other comprehensive schools nationally. There are roughly the same number of boys and girls. The school is situated in New Milton but serves a wide area, which is a mix of urban and rural districts. Pupils are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds; just over seven per cent are entitled to free school meals, which is below the average for comprehensive schools nationally. The school has been oversubscribed for many years.

Pupils' attainment on entry varies across year groups. In most instances, it is just above average, but with rather more very low attainers and somewhat fewer very high attainers than are found in most schools nationally. The school has identified around 13 per cent of its pupils as having special educational needs, which is lower than average. Of these, 18 pupils have statements of special educational needs. Needs include dyslexia and emotional and behavioural difficulties, together with speech and physical impairments. Less than one per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language. Typically, just over 80 per cent of 16 year olds move into further education. Last year, about 50 per cent of Year 11 pupils joined the school's sixth form, which opened in 1995. There are currently 204 sixth form pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a popular school that is performing very well. Academic standards are high. At ages 14, 16 and 18, test and examination results are well above national averages. Pupils achieve very well during their time at the school; academic standards are considerably higher than might be expected given pupils' attainment on entry. Teaching is good, and often very good. Pupils have positive attitudes; relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils themselves are very good. The school is led and managed well and has sustained the high standards noted in the last Ofsted report. As such, even though expenditure is high, it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school sets and achieves high standards for pupils' academic performance and for their personal development.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations for standards of work and behaviour. As a result, pupils make rapid progress in learning; behaviour is good.
- Teaching in mathematics, art, geography and physical education is particularly strong.
- Pupils' personal development is fostered effectively; pupils welcome the many opportunities they are given to take responsibility and to participate in a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Pastoral care provides pupils with very good personal and academic support. Academic monitoring at Key Stage 4 and post-16 is strong, helping pupils to achieve very well and to attain high standards.

What could be improved

- The monitoring and evaluation of aspects of the school's work are underdeveloped.
- Information technology is not used sufficiently to support learning in subjects.
- Standards in music are unsatisfactory at the end of Key Stage 3.
- The school's curriculum is satisfactory, but it does not meet the needs of all pupils and all subjects equally well.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in 1995. The first key issue in the last report has been addressed well. In spite of the inevitable trauma resulting from the sudden death of the previous headteacher, the school has maintained its focus on promoting high standards. Good behaviour and good quality teaching are still the norm. Academic standards

remain high. The school has also made good progress in promoting opportunities for pupils to develop independent and enquiry-based learning skills. These skills are now firm features of pupils' learning across a range of subjects. Progress towards meeting the other key issues identified in the last report has been less successful. Until the appointment of the current headteacher, there was no strategic overview for whole school curriculum planning; links between whole school plans and departmental plans remained unclear. Although some middle managers were given whole school responsibilities, until the last year there had been no review and revision of the overall management structure to ensure greater participation in decision making. The use of information technology to support learning across the curriculum remains a key issue. The school is aware that it does not fulfil requirements for collective worship.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on Key Stage 3 test results and average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 |
| Key stage 3 tests | A | A | A | A |
| GCSE examinations | A | A | A | A |
| A-levels/AS-levels | B | A | A | |

| Key | |
|--------------------|---|
| well above average | A |
| above average | B |
| average | C |
| below average | D |
| well below average | E |

Academic standards are high; overall, pupils achieve better than expected results. At Key Stage 3, results in mathematics and science have been well above national averages for all schools for the past three years. Results in English have not been as strong; they have been in line with national averages until 1999, when they too were well above comparative figures nationally. The school's average points score has improved since 1995, in line with the trend nationally.

In 1999, the school's average GCSE points score was well above the national average for schools with similar intake. So, too, were the percentages of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades and five or more A* to G grades. The percentage of pupils gaining one or more A* to G grade placed the school in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. The only downside is that the school's average points score has shown a slight downward trend, as opposed to a rising trend nationally. Within the context of high standards overall, performance has been consistently strong in recent years in mathematics and art; it has been relatively weak in English and modern foreign languages. The school has set itself a target of gaining 65 per cent A* to C grades in 2000. Given the average attainment profile on entry of the current Year 11, this is both realistic and challenging; academic monitoring indicates that the school is on line to meet its target. A level standards are equally high; the school's average points score has risen consistently over the past three years, as has the average points score for pupils taking advanced GNVQ courses. Inspection evidence largely confirms and substantiates the picture painted by the school's examination results. In nearly all subjects, standards of work seen were above or well above those expected for pupils' ages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attitudes to the school | Good overall and often very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and appreciate the opportunities the school offers them. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good in lessons, with very few instances of disruptive behaviour. Behaviour around the school is civilised; respect for property is high. |

| | |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Personal development and relationships | Very good relationships are evident in classrooms. Pupils are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, especially those with special educational needs. |
| Attendance | Good. Punctuality to some lessons is less secure. |

Good standards of behaviour and attendance, underpinned by positive attitudes and very good relationships, create a very healthy climate for learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged 11-14 years | aged 14-16 years | aged over 16 years |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Good | Good | Very good |

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

The good and often very good teaching promotes good quality learning for all. Pupils understand what is expected of them. Most work hard, concentrate well and build on existing knowledge effectively to acquire new knowledge and skills. Teaching was excellent in 3 per cent of lessons observed, very good in 30 per cent, good in 38 per cent, satisfactory in 26 per cent and unsatisfactory in 3 per cent. Teaching is rather stronger at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3; it is particularly strong in the sixth form where 80 per cent of teaching is good or very good. Teaching is satisfactory overall in English, very good in mathematics and good in science. Teaching is also very good overall in art, geography and physical education. In music, teaching is good for the relatively small proportion of pupils who take examination courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16; however, it is unsatisfactory overall due to the unsatisfactory progress made by pupils at Key Stage 3. Teaching is satisfactory overall in information technology, and good in all other subjects, including religious education. Literacy skills are developed in all subjects but expectations are not consistent. Numeracy skills are taught well in mathematics and used in many subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Satisfactory, but the curriculum does not meet the needs of all pupils and all subjects equally well. Statutory requirements for information technology at Key Stage 4 are not met fully. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good. Pupils are supported well and make very good progress towards their individual targets. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good overall. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. A strong sense of right and wrong is promoted; extra-curricular provision is very good. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good; spiritual provision is satisfactory. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Very good. The school is very effective in the support and guidance it gives its pupils and in providing for their welfare. |

The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils well and provides effectively for their personal development. However, for some middle and lower attaining pupils, there is insufficient diversity and flexibility of choice. Provision for art, music and physical education at Key Stage 3 limits the progress that pupils can make.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good overall. The headteacher provides positive and effective leadership. Roles and responsibilities of senior managers are clear but, in some instances, these are not carried out as effectively as they might be. The quality of middle management varies, but is good overall. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Governors are very supportive and are well informed. They have recently begun to take a leadership role in strategic planning and decision making. Most statutory requirements are met. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Satisfactory. The school is starting to develop strategies and criteria for 'self-evaluation', but this aspect of its work is not strongly developed. |
| The strategic use of resources | The school has enjoyed very high levels of funding in recent years. The high quality learning evident in classrooms indicates that pupils are benefiting from well-targeted spending. The quality of the school's strategic financial planning in the light of reduced funding has yet to be tested. |

The school is led and managed well. The relatively new headteacher has put in place a number of very good initiatives to develop the school further, based on an initial, perceptive analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Teachers share his commitment to high standards. There are rather generous levels of teaching staff and sufficient non-teaching staff to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the school on a day-to-day basis. Accommodation is appropriate for teaching the school's curriculum. Learning resources are satisfactory in all subjects. However, many subjects do not have appropriate access to computers; hence the use of information technology to support learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Appropriate steps are taken to apply the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good teaching by supportive staff. • The good progress their children make. • They find the school approachable. • Their children like school. • They feel the school is a community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowding in corridors. • Short lunch breaks. • The information they receive about their child's progress. • The closeness with which the school works with parents. |

The largely positive views expressed at the parents' evening and through the questionnaire were confirmed by inspection findings. Initially, the team shared parents' concerns about overcrowding in corridors. However, a one-way system and a sensible approach to movement between lessons by pupils minimise difficulties from overcrowding. The school has reviewed its lunch arrangements and changes are to be made very soon after the inspection to reduce the time pupils need to queue for food. The team could find no rational explanation for the rather negative perceptions about the quality of links with parents. Overall, inspection evidence indicated that parents are kept well informed. A highlight of communication with parents is the attractive school Internet website; other information is comprehensive if, occasionally, rather dull. Parents are encouraged to maintain a dialogue with the school through homework diaries and clearly make a good contribution to their children's learning. Nevertheless, the school has taken on board parents' concerns in its quest for further improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Academic standards are high throughout the school. Examination results are well above national averages at ages 14, 16 and 18. Pupils achieve very well during their time at the school. Standards are considerably higher than might be expected given pupils' attainment on entry. This can be attributed to a variety of factors, but in particular to the good, and often very good teaching that exists in the school, to pupils' own positive attitudes to work and to the very good relationships evident in classrooms.

2. In 1999, the school's results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average for all schools and well above the average for schools with similar intake. This high level of performance was reflected in the results for both mathematics and science. Results in English were not as strong. Although well above the national average for all schools, performance in English was in line with, rather than well above, results for similar schools nationally. In recent years, the school's overall National Curriculum points score has risen in line with the national trend, largely due to improvements in English results. Whereas mathematics and science results have been well above the national average for all schools since 1997, English results were in line with the national average until 1999. If results from 1996 to 1999 are taken together, standards for boys' and girls' achievements are very similar in mathematics and science. However, in English, although girls have achieved slightly higher standards than boys, the gap is much narrower than that found nationally.

3. A similar picture is given by the school's GCSE results. Again standards are high; the school's average GCSE points score is well above the national average for all schools and well above that for schools with similar intake. So, too, are the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades and the proportion gaining five or more A* to G grades. The proportion of pupils gaining one or more A* to G grade places the school in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. The only downside is that the school's average points score, whilst consistently high, shows a slight downward trend as opposed to a rising trend nationally. Although girls attain better results than boys, the gap is broadly in line with national trends. Within the context of high standards, performance has been consistently strong in recent years in mathematics and art; that in English and modern foreign languages has been relatively weak.

4. A level standards are equally high. The school's average points score for pupils taking two or more A levels was well above national results in 1998 and in 1999; the school's first set of A level results in 1997 were above the national average. The points score has risen steadily over the past three years, as has the average points score for the 20 or so pupils taking advanced GNVQ courses.

5. The school does not use a profile of pupils' attainment on entry to predict end of Key Stage 3 results, nor does it set targets for pupils' performance at the end of Year 9. However, it uses results from standardised tests taken on entry to predict likely performance at GCSE and to set appropriate targets. The attainment profile of the current Year 11 on entry was average, as opposed to the slightly above average profile of most former and subsequent year groups. Hence, the 65 per cent target for five or more A* to C grades at

GCSE in 2000 is both realistic and challenging. The strong academic monitoring that takes place at Key Stage 4 indicates that the school is on line to meet this target.

6. Inspection evidence largely substantiates and confirms the picture painted by the school's examination results at ages 14, 16 and 18. In some subjects, standards attained in lessons were not quite as high as those which test and examination results suggest. This is for a variety of reasons. In particular, there is still some time to go before public examinations take place. The final 'tuning' of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding to meet expected levels has yet to take place, especially for some pupils in middle sets. Nevertheless, in Year 9, standards of work in most subjects are above those expected nationally for pupils' age. Levels of work in mathematics, science and art are high. The many higher attaining pupils in art produce work that was excellent by any comparison. In design and technology, information technology and modern foreign languages, standards are as expected nationally for pupils' age. Attainment in music is not high enough; most pupils do not develop their musical ideas beyond a very basic level.

7. In Year 11, levels of work are already well above those expected for pupils' ages in mathematics, art and geography. Some particularly high level work was seen by high attainers in mathematics and art. The standard of pupils' work is above that expected nationally in nearly all other subjects, including science. In information technology, although standards are good in some aspects of the subject, many pupils do not have the opportunity to develop their skills in using information technology to measure and control events; hence, overall, standards are not as high as they should be. In Year 13, standards are higher than those found nationally in most subjects, with well above expected performance in mathematics and art. Standards in modern foreign languages and music are in line with national performance.

8. Standards of literacy are above average overall. Many pupils, including some lower attainers, read fluently and confidently. Most use a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical constructions to convey ideas and feelings effectively in their personal writing. Pupils listen well and are articulate; many are able to sustain and develop arguments successfully. Standards of numeracy are well above average overall, although a small, but significant, fraction of younger pupils do not know their tables and number bonds thoroughly. Pupils use calculators sensibly and appropriately; in so doing, they reinforce their mental calculation skills effectively.

9. Results from national tests and examinations indicate that the high standards achieved throughout the school are not just a reflection of pupils' attainment on entry to the school. At ages 14 and 16, results are not only well above average compared with all schools nationally but, as reported above, they are well above average when compared to schools with similar intake. For many years, the attainment profile of most year groups has been only slightly above average on entry. Thus, the 1999 and previous national test results indicate that pupils achieve very well during Key Stage 3 and make very good progress in their learning. Actual results at GCSE are considerably above those predicted by scores from standardised tests taken on entry, suggesting that the school adds considerable value to pupils' attainment during their time at the school. An inspection analysis, comparing 1999 GCSE results with 1997 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum results, indicates that pupils make considerably better than expected progress during Key Stage 4 and achieve very well. There is no overall analysis of value added carried out by the school post-16. However, an A level points score of 22, well above the national average of 17.1, indicates that pupils

achieve at least as well as they should and, in many instances, better than might be expected during their time in the sixth form.

10. Inspection findings again confirm the evidence provided by examination results; namely, that pupils make rapid progress in learning during their time at the school and achieve considerably higher standards than might be expected. This very good rate of progress is promoted by high expectations from teachers; pupils are expected to work hard and, at Key Stage 4 and post-16, to meet challenging targets. Most respond positively and come to have high expectations of themselves. This ethos to do well is built upon by good quality teaching and by leaders and managers within the school who, in general, focus on raising standards yet further.

11. Higher, middle and lower attaining pupils achieve very well across a range of subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into lessons and are able to make good progress because of good teaching and the small group sizes. In many lessons, although their standard of work is below national expectations for their age, they achieve above what might be expected given their prior attainment. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of higher attaining and talented pupils and extend their learning well in lessons. In mathematics, science and French, selected pupils are entered for their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10. Most achieve extremely well, attaining standards that are well in excess of those expected for their age. Overall, pupils achieve at least what might be expected of them in almost all subjects, at both key stages and in the sixth form. Exceptions are in information technology, where pupils do not achieve as well as they should at Key Stage 4 and in music at Key Stage 3 where, again, progress is too slow.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils enjoy coming to school and remain enthusiastic in the sixth form. Discussions with pupils in all year groups confirmed that pupils' attitudes to their school are positive and, in many instances, very positive. Pupils like their school and appreciate the opportunities it offers to them. All pupils see staff as friendly, helpful and supportive; sixth formers in particular are very positive about the quality of teaching they receive. For example, a sixth form pupil wrote to the team, after the inspection, to express her appreciation of the chemistry department. Pupils report that they are expected to work hard but that they enjoy the challenge. Pupils appreciate that some facilities, such as the library and the canteen, open before school starts. These positive attitudes are reflected in lessons. Pupils are keen to learn and respond eagerly to teachers' questions. They are very willing to talk about their work with visitors and to explain their ideas and findings. Pupils with special educational needs are equally positive; they appreciate the help given to them by individual needs assistants. The school has developed their self-confidence well so that they play a full part in question and answer sessions alongside their peers. Sixth formers demonstrate mature attitudes to their studies.

13. The overall standard of behaviour is good. Both pupils and parents consider that teachers maintain high standards successfully; inspection findings support this view. The quality of behaviour in lessons is good overall; frequently it is very good. In most instances, pupils are able to learn without disruption from others. Behaviour round the school is civilised, with pupils behaving sensibly when arriving at and leaving school, and walking quietly, if rather slowly, between lessons along the narrow corridors. Pupils behave well at break time and when waiting outside classrooms and in the long queues for dinner. Respect for property is high; there is very little litter or vandalism and no graffiti.

14. Last year the number of exclusions was low: there were no permanent exclusions and only 29 temporary ones, relating to 23 pupils. The school has introduced sensible measures for identifying those at risk of exclusion and for doing all it can to keep them at school. Those excluded are re-integrated unobtrusively. The school maintains proper records of exclusions and follows the LEA reporting system.

15. Relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils are courteous to each other and to staff. They relate positively to each other, co-operate well and work very well together in lessons. Pupils react politely when addressed, and are friendly and helpful to visitors. There are hardly any examples of oppressive behaviour round the school, or of bullying or racism. The school impresses on new pupils and their parents the need to consider others, and pupils react very positively. Respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs is high; pupils are highly sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, especially those with special educational needs. This makes for a tolerant and supportive society.

16. Many pupils take an active part in the day-to-day life of the school; for example there is enthusiastic support for the school council, whose advice is welcomed by senior management. Sixth-formers have numerous opportunities for taking responsibility; they are seen to have an important role in helping to run the school. They help to preventing bullying, assist younger pupils with their work and support form tutors. Even the youngest pupils are given opportunities for taking responsibility, for example, through the system of choosing games captains in each tutor group. The school offers a very wide range of popular extra-curricular activities, which are taken up enthusiastically. A good example is the lively and cheerful band practice that took place before registration on the last morning of the inspection.

17. Pupils' attendance is good. The attendance rate is above that found nationally. Unauthorised absence at 0.5 per cent is running at less than half the national average. High attendance has a very positive effect on the attainment and progress of pupils. The legal requirements for recording and reporting attendance are met. Lessons mostly start on time first thing in the morning, but there are many examples of their starting five or more minutes late thereafter. Pupil registration requirements sometimes cause further delay. Pupils are mostly on time at the start of the day and when returning from breaks. They generally display a responsible attitude to punctuality.

18. The last inspection report noted that behaviour and attendance in the school were good, with pupils being courteous and good-natured. These standards have been maintained.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of pupils' learning is good and often very good. Pupils understand what is expected of them. Most work hard, concentrate well and build on existing knowledge effectively to acquire new knowledge and skills. Many are prepared to persevere with new ideas, until they have developed an appropriate understanding of the issues involved. This quality of learning is promoted by good, and often very good teaching. Of the lessons observed, 3 per cent were excellent, 30 per cent were very good, 38 per cent were good, 26 per cent were satisfactory and 3 per cent were unsatisfactory. Teaching is rather stronger at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3; it is particularly strong in the sixth form where 80 per cent of teaching is good or very good.

20. The good quality teaching is due to a variety of factors, but three real strengths

underpin much of the teaching within the school. Teachers are confident and competent with the subjects they teach; most have high expectations of pupils and most manage pupils very skilfully in lessons. As a result, a sense of urgency and pace underpins pupils' learning. In addition, there are no aspects of teaching which are unsatisfactory overall and no generic weaknesses across subjects. Teaching is very good overall in mathematics, art, geography and physical education. It is satisfactory overall in information technology and in personal, social and health education. In music, teaching is good for the relatively small proportion of pupils who take examination courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16; however, it is unsatisfactory overall due to the unsatisfactory progress made by pupils at Key Stage 3. In all other subjects, including business education and GNVQ lessons, teaching is good. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. They settle to work quickly and respond well to the help given to them by teachers and individual needs assistants. This is very effective in helping them to give of their best and to learn well. They have very good attitudes to work and diligently apply themselves to keeping pace with their contemporaries.

21. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge very effectively in preparing and teaching their lessons. The start to most lessons is lively and interesting; pupils' interest is captured from the start. Often, the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject is evident throughout, sustaining pupils' interest and generating enjoyment in the work being done, as observed, for example, in many science lessons. Teachers are able to explain new ideas confidently and correctly to pupils at a level that is matched well to pupils' previous learning. This helps pupils to build effectively on what they already know. Teachers ask perceptive, probing questions, not only to help pupils recall previous learning, but also to enable pupils to think ideas through for themselves. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and to speculate about 'why' things happen; this allows pupils to develop their understanding of new ideas, as well as acquiring new knowledge and skills. Teachers have a good grasp of the most effective ways to teach aspects of their subject. Most use a variety of approaches well geared to pupils' learning needs, as for example in a Year 8 mathematics lesson on rotational symmetry. Many teachers draw out key learning points effectively, consolidating and reinforcing the learning that has taken place during the lesson and, where appropriate, reinforcing links with previous or future learning.

22. Lessons are planned and structured well; pupils are given clear time targets and good guidance on what is expected of them. The purpose of lessons is usually very clear. This helps pupils to settle to work quickly and to achieve a good pace of learning. In many instances, teachers intervene effectively to discuss common difficulties, to challenge individuals and to refocus learning, thus maintaining a good pace throughout. For example, in a Year 9 physical education volleyball lesson, the teacher intervened effectively to highlight good techniques to help pupils learn. Most use resources well to stimulate pupils' interest. For example, in religious education, very good use of the school's Intranet system adds vitality to lessons. In many instances, very good use is made of support staff. Homework is used appropriately in most subjects to reinforce classwork.

23. Most teachers manage pupils very skilfully in lessons. Teachers have high expectations for standards of work and behaviour. Pupils know what is expected of them; most respond accordingly. The ethos in many classrooms is of quiet, purposeful activity. The high expectations result in high levels of self-motivation among pupils. Most want to succeed; they concentrate very well in lessons and persevere with new and difficult ideas. There are multiple instances of high levels of concentration and of perseverance, for example in lower sets in history in Year 11. Negative attitudes are seen but rarely, though there are occasional instances of poor concentration or passivity. Pupils work hard; their capacity to work independently and to persevere is good in all subjects and very good in many, notably mathematics and art. Pupils have a strong desire to improve their work and

take an intense pride in the finished product, as seen for example in art and design and technology. Good examples of pupils taking responsibility for their own work and of being able to listen to conflicting points of view were seen in many lessons, for example in religious education and in personal and social education lessons, where the focus was on citizenship.

24. Within the context of predominantly good and often very good teaching, a relative weakness is teachers' use of day-to-day assessment to help pupils understand what they need to do to make progress. Practice varies considerably both within and across departments. In general, teachers know their pupils well and pitch work accordingly to ensure appropriate challenge; they also ensure that work is suitable for pupils with special educational needs. Most give appropriate praise and verbal feedback to motivate pupils during lessons. Most mark pupils work regularly but, in many instances, marking does not help pupils to understand how to improve their work. Feedback to pupils from other assessments is also of varying usefulness in supporting learning. It is effective in mathematics, science and history. For example, in science, assessment of pupils' work is used well to provide encouragement and support for pupils. This promotes self-confidence and a willingness to attempt to learn more difficult concepts, whilst allowing pupils to be realistic and objective about their own attainment.

25. Teachers have a good understanding of the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs and keep a close eye on where difficulties may be encountered. Many slower learners are taught in small groups; this is beneficial as the teacher can give more individual attention to differing needs. Individual needs assistants, and learning support teachers, provide very good support to class teachers by taking a flexible approach to the help they give to individuals. These approaches are most successful in helping pupils to learn. Pupils' learning is particularly well focused through good short-term targets on individual education plans; these are used very well and are understood by pupils and teachers.

26. Literacy skills are developed and used in all areas of the curriculum but expectations are not consistent across subjects. For example, pupils are expected to produce a range of writing for different purposes and audiences in English, science and design and technology; these expectations are not as clear in other subjects. Very good examples of extended writing were seen in the work of Year 11 pupils in modern foreign languages and in religious education, but extended writing was less evident in some other subjects, for example, in geography and history. While lists of subject-specific vocabulary are displayed in all classrooms, the use made of them by staff is variable. Teachers have inconsistent expectations regarding presentation and sometimes accept substandard work from pupils. Marking does not always emphasise the importance of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Similarly, the reading demands placed upon pupils are variable. In English and history, there is good emphasis at Key Stage 3 on developing skills such as skimming and scanning, while in design and technology, reading is an important element of research in the design process.

27. Mathematical skills are reinforced in several areas of the curriculum. In science and in geography, graphs and calculations are used effectively. Accurate measurement, including weighing, is developed in design and technology. Good consolidation of spatial concepts occurs in art. Particularly effective use of data handling skills is made in the vocational courses in the sixth form.

28. The last report stated that the school should promote more opportunities for pupils to develop independent and enquiry based learning skills. The school has put considerable

effort into improving this aspect of pupils' learning and has been successful. These features are now a firm feature of learning in many subject areas. Independent learning is particularly strong in art, where pupils are expected to make decisions for themselves from an early age; this results in an individuality of approach and response and, in many instances, very high standards.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

29. The curriculum offers good opportunities for pupils to learn well and to achieve high academic standards. Its design of short lessons and the teaching of all National Curriculum subjects, together with information technology and religious education, provide a balanced learning programme. Enhancement to this provision is made through personal, social and health education at Key Stages 3 and 4 and a strong community service programme for pupils post-16. Curricular provision at all key stages is satisfactory. The range of courses is very good; it meets most pupils' needs and aspirations well and enables them to attain high standards. The needs of a minority, particularly some lower attainers, are not as well met. With the exception of part of the information technology programme of study at Key Stage 4, all statutory requirements are met. The curriculum covers 26 hours and 15 minutes of teaching time, which is well above the recommended time of 25 hours.

30. The breadth of curricular provision at Key Stage 3 is good, but its overall contribution to pupils' learning is reduced because of the below average time allocation given to art and music. This was reported at the time of the last inspection and has not been addressed. Standards are well above average in art due to skilled teaching. However, pupils in Year 7 are disadvantaged in the progress they can make because of the short length of lessons, combined with the fact that they receive just one lesson per week. In music, where teaching is not as strong, far less progress is made and the National Curriculum programmes of study are not covered in sufficient depth. In both these subjects, setting arrangements do not support learning as well as in other subjects. A good quality, balanced physical education programme makes good provision for pupils but, again, short lessons inhibit opportunities for practice and improvement. In all other subjects, the organisation of the curriculum is supportive of pupils' learning. Modern foreign languages teaching and learning benefit from the above average time allocated to the subject.

31. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum promotes high standards very effectively. The additional teaching time, and the short lessons, allows the school to provide a high number of GCSE examination courses; it expects all pupils to follow 10 of these courses. At this key stage, all pupils continue to study English, mathematics, science, information technology, physical education and religious education. The time provided for physical education is too low to allow for full coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Guidance is provided for pupils to choose a further five subjects, with the expectation that all pupils will follow humanities, modern foreign languages and a technology course. Higher attaining pupils are catered for very well by this highly academic curriculum. Some are able to take three of their GCSE subjects at the end of Year 10. In Year 11, they continue to study these subjects, usually following an AS level examination course. This provision has not been evaluated sufficiently well to ensure that pupils' interests continue to be developed. For the average and least able pupils, there is insufficient choice of alternative courses to

supplement the academic diet on offer. The school is beginning to consider vocational courses, but has not progressed far to date.

32. Throughout the school, the curricular provision made for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The learning opportunities presented to such pupils in lessons are good, because of small group sizes, good quality teaching by class teachers and very good support from the learning support department. This department has recently introduced a computer package to assist the development of reading, spelling and numeracy skills, but it is too early to comment on the longer-term effectiveness of this provision. There are no planned opportunities to improve other pupils' basic skills through activities such as paired reading or individual short-term reading support. The school has not taken sufficient account of diversifying its provision and considering how best to meet the short-term needs of pupils who are not on the school's register of special educational needs, but who nevertheless need help at specific times.

33. The relatively new post-16 curriculum is broad, with a good range of A and AS level and GNVQ subjects available to pupils. In addition to the range of traditional subjects, psychology, theatre studies, economics, control systems and business studies are offered. GNVQ programmes are available in art and design, business, health and social care and leisure and tourism; these programmes are available to pupils wishing to study at advanced or intermediate levels. All pupils study a general studies A level course; a selection process through trial examinations at the end of Year 12 and in the autumn of Year 13 means that just over half of the pupils take the final examination. There is an individual tutorial system, providing pupils with effective personal and careers guidance.

34. The sixth form curriculum promotes high quality learning very effectively. Standards at age 18 are well above national averages; the majority of Year 13 pupils move on to higher education. However, at present, the sixth form is not fully cost-effective. To improve its efficiency, the headteacher has put several measures in place. Often, when relatively small numbers choose to take certain courses, Year 12 and Year 13 pupils are taught together. In other instances, for example in art and health and social care, pupils studying for different qualifications are taught together. It is too early to judge the impact of these very necessary efficiency measures on standards.

35. There is no clear rationale underpinning the curriculum. The previous inspection report commented on a lack of strategic perspective for the curriculum and lack of a whole school curriculum policy; action to address these matters has begun only recently. Curriculum planning year-on-year is satisfactory, but it is unimaginative and does not cater for the needs of all pupils as well as it could. The present curriculum broadly meets the aims of the school and makes a very strong contribution to challenging more able pupils. Subject schemes of work are securely in place and teachers use the setting arrangements effectively to shape the curriculum, so that most pupils can achieve well. This is reflected in the high proportion of pupils who gain five or more A* to G grades at GCSE.

36. Opportunities for pupils to extend their experiences through extra-curricular activities and subject-related visits are very good. The school offers a very wide programme of educational day and residential visits across most subjects and all key stages. Music, physical education and school productions are particularly well supported by pupils. The school has a very good selection of choirs and bands, and an orchestra. The sporting opportunities for pupils are also very good; a full programme of competitive events is in place with many teams and individuals gaining success. School productions are considered to be of a high quality with a substantial number of pupils involved; these take place two or three times a year. Opportunities for pupils with special educational needs to

attend extra-curricular handwriting, spelling, reading or homework clubs are limited to those offered by individual teachers. Even so, such opportunities help them to improve their literacy skills. At post-16, the range of activities is rather more limited, focusing on a programme of speakers and a strong community service programme.

37. There is a commitment from the school, supported by its equal opportunities statement, to allow all pupils to gain maximum benefit from the courses they take. The school is largely successful in this respect. Since the last inspection, a lift has been installed to give access to the upper floor and careful consideration is given to the needs of the physically disabled pupils in the school. A co-ordinator for equal opportunities has been appointed recently to ensure that the school realises its commitments fully. She has made a very good start on auditing class composition by gender and the standards achieved in these classes.

38. Current provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory and covers sex and drugs education. However, the school wishes to improve provision further and a newly appointed co-ordinator is reviewing provision. The programme to be adopted shows far greater breadth, with clearer progression in learning. Increased co-ordination of provision is also planned. The current programme at Key Stage 3 is linked to administrative form period time and is taught by form tutors; at Key Stage 4, it is taught by a team of humanities teachers and, in the sixth form, through a planned programme of speakers. Aspects of health education are also covered in science, technology and physical education lessons. At present, provision for personal, social and health education is not monitored and evaluated sufficiently well to ensure that all pupils gain benefit from the programmes.

39. Careers education is good. Teaching starts in Year 9 and a well-planned programme continues through Years 10 and 11. Post-16 arrangements are also good. Good guidance is given on making choices and for using the careers section of the library. Pupils are also able to make good use of computer packages to assist in their decision making. Good support is provided by the careers service. The work experience programme is well established and care is taken to ensure that all health and safety checks are made for placements.

40. The school is involved successfully in the local community; it draws on available expertise very well to support pupils' learning. Through activities such as building the millennium beacon, pupils are able to support the community in a tangible way, while enhancing subject skills through a specific project. A whole range of activities, such as collecting for charities, parties and concerts for senior citizens, school productions and the use of computer facilities by junior school pupils, brings the school directly into contact with the local population in a positive and useful way. Within the school, the sixth form community service programme provides a strong additional dimension to the support for younger pupils and to the personal development of the post-16 pupils.

41. The induction procedures for pupils on entry to school, and the transfer arrangements of information from primary schools are good. The school is part of a pyramid arrangement whereby it meets with a group of primary schools. The exchange of information about the curriculum ensures that there is continuity in learning and time is not wasted by needlessly repeating Key Stage 2 work. All the core subjects build on work that has been done in the primary schools. There are also good procedures for university entrance, backed by sound careers advice. Partnership arrangements with two universities for initial teacher training are in place. At present, the links with a further education college are only in the initial stages; these have still a long way to be developed. A particular

strength is the link made with outside agencies in relation to pupils who have special educational needs. Annual reviews for pupils with statements of special educational need include a number of professionals; the careers service gives advice to these pupils and follow-up notes are recorded meticulously by the school.

42. The school has identified its curriculum as a target on the current school development plan. Until this time, very little change had taken place since the last inspection and the school had not addressed the shortcomings that had been identified. In this respect, unsatisfactory progress has been made.

43. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual provision is satisfactory. The four assemblies a week for each year group are often thought-provoking, and make a significant contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection week, most assemblies had some spiritual content, but a moral theme was paramount; few constituted an act of collective worship. Religious education provides strong implicit spiritual input into the curriculum of all pupils in both the specific and the more general sense. Art also makes a strong contribution. Other subjects add to the overall provision. For example, in geography, pupils examine the effects of earth movements on Mankind; music encourages pupils to appreciate the performance of others; drama enables improvisation on the theme of the Seven Deadly Sins. In science, Year 11 pupils undertake work on evolution and Charles Darwin's theory.

44. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Opportunities are provided regularly, in most subjects, for pupils to consider their personal responsibilities. Most pupils follow the school's code of behaviour well, there are pleasant, supportive relationships and a strong sense of right and wrong is promoted. Many subjects also provide good opportunities for pupils to discuss moral issues. For example, in geography, pupils discuss global warming issues; in English, the morality underpinning texts is discussed; in history, morality in Roman Britain provides a forum for debate, whilst in physical education, the need for fair play and rule conformity is debated. The personal and social education programme, business studies and religious education also make positive contributions to pupils' moral development.

45. Provision for pupils' social development is also very good. The promotion of very good, co-operative relationships in and out of classrooms is a strong feature of this aspect of school life. Year and school councils provide practical opportunities for pupils to take some responsibility for communal decision making. Sixth formers are productively linked to tutor groups. Further opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of social issues are provided through subjects. For example, pupils examine the social and historical context of writers such as Shakespeare and Priestley and the use of mathematics in a broad social context, including the running of a school bank by Year 11 pupils. Much paired and small group work also promotes a sense of social responsibility. Visits by local business people to help sixth form pupils with interview techniques are much appreciated.

46. Cultural provision is good. Cultural and multicultural development of pupils is achieved through local, national and international visits to art galleries, theatres, lectures and museums and to countries such as Holland, Greece and Israel, giving insights into family relationships in other communities. There are regular school exchanges with schools in France and Germany. The music and movement of many other countries are used as a stimulus in music and dance lessons. Different cultural aspects of life and religion are studied in English, in the humanities subjects, in physical education and in modern foreign languages, so that pupils are made increasingly aware of the diversity of life. The school's

Internet facility is encouraging pupils to research other cultures further and to broaden their vision. There are some good displays of cultural diversity in a number of school areas, for example in modern foreign languages.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The school recognises the importance of pastoral care and has set targets for improvement in many areas. It is, nevertheless, very effective already in its support and guidance to pupils and in providing for their welfare. This makes a very positive contribution to educational standards and helps pupils to feel happy and secure. The school has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Pastoral staff know their pupils very well and pupils confidently turn to them, other members of staff, or even sixth-formers for help. Parents greatly appreciate the amount of time staff devote to their children's welfare. The arrangements for transfer to university and college, or for training for employment, ensure that pupils move on with confidence.

48. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress and personal development are generally good. Heads of year usually retain pastoral care of their charges from Year 7 to Year 11, which provides a high level of continuity. The school actively encourages pastoral staff to maintain close contact with pupils' families. Tutors keep a detailed track of pupils' progress and pupils are well supported in their learning and personal development, as for example in the support offered to Year 9 pupils, when choosing their GCSE options.

49. There are effective systems, both whole school and departmental level, for assessing and analysing pupils' attainment and progress and for ensuring that achievement is as high as it should be. Each year group has annual examinations and the great majority of subjects have regular modular tests. Results are used for setting purposes and to inform the work planned for differing sets. However, the strength of the school's practice is the collection and use of a range of assessment data, stored on the school's administrative computer. At Key Stage 4 and post-16, individual pupil profiles are built up using Year 9 national test results and results from standardised tests taken on entry. These not only summarise past attainment, but predict likely future performance. Profiles are supplied to all class teachers and tutors and are updated regularly. Overall, they are used very well to monitor pupils' academic progress, to set individual targets and to identify underachievers across the ability range. Pupils thus identified are provided with mentoring, to help them realise their potential. At present the system works particularly well in mathematics, science and history, but less successfully in English, modern foreign languages, geography and art. The school plans to extend academic monitoring into Key Stage 3 in the near future. These procedures, together with the implementation of the school's assessment and marking policy, lack central monitoring and evaluation to ensure consistent and effective application across faculties, subjects and teachers.

50. Pupils who have special educational needs or learning difficulties are identified early and entered on the special needs register; this is maintained well and clear and careful records are kept of the strategies of support that are used. Individual education plans are well established and provide useful information on pupils' strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for strategies for teachers to use. The intention is for teachers to set their own short-term targets based on the recommendations, but few have managed to complete these in a succinct written form. The targets set by the learning support department are very clear and shared with the pupils. They provide clear goals and pupils' progress is checked and recorded on a very regular basis in lessons. Annual reviews are well prepared and carried out effectively. All statutory requirements are met.

51. The high quality of co-operation and liaison between all staff on pastoral matters is an important feature of the school. Pupils appreciate greatly both the academic and personal support given, and the opportunities given to take responsibility. The school complies fully with child protection guidelines, and liaison arrangements with social services and other external agencies are very good. The school gives very effective support to pupils with special educational needs and staff are assiduous in helping them meet the targets set in IEPs and statements.

52. The school generally complies with legal requirements for health and safety procedures. It has introduced comprehensive procedures and instructions for promoting pupils' health and safety; these are monitored regularly. Provision for medical care and first aid is very good, with a qualified matron on duty throughout the school day. Sick pupils are appropriately looked after in a well equipped medical room. Regular tests are carried out on equipment. The school has already put in hand action to improve the unsatisfactory state of the pupils' washrooms and lavatories and has, within the physical limitations of the school site, taken sensible steps to overcome the problems of separating vehicles and pedestrians.

53. The school operates effective measures for monitoring and improving attendance. The new awards and sanctions procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour, and for eliminating bullying, are very effective. Staff have high expectations of good behaviour and promote an orderly and cheerful atmosphere throughout the school. These expectations are fully realised in the standards of behaviour observed round the school. Bullying is rare and then usually of a minor nature. Pupils in all year groups and parents are happy that inappropriate behaviour is dealt with rapidly and effectively. The very few incidents of anti-social behaviour observed during the inspection were dealt with quickly and sensitively.

54. The last inspection report noted the effectiveness of the pastoral system and did not raise any health and safety issues.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. The school is popular with parents; it has been oversubscribed for many years. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and those who responded to the questionnaire are very positive about the school in general. Inspection findings largely support parents' views. Parents consider that their children make good progress and that teaching is good. Some concerns were expressed at the parents' meeting about provision for those pupils in Year 11 who have taken GCSEs early. The school is aware that it has not yet fully solved this problem, especially in science. Parents feel that the school promotes good behaviour; they are comfortable about approaching the school, which has high expectations of pupils. They feel that the school supports pupils with special needs very effectively, arranges the induction of new pupils well, and pays considerable attention to supporting pupils and solving their personal problems. Parents recognise that pupils are expected to work hard and have to undertake a substantial amount of homework. Most think the quantity to be about right. Most feel a significant factor in the school's continuing success is the quality of leadership from the top. Some other factors caused some concern, such as overcrowding in corridors and the short lunch break. Although, initially, the team shared these concerns, a one-way system and sensible movement between lessons by pupils minimise difficulties from overcrowding. The school has already reviewed the lunch time arrangements to reduce queuing time.

56. Most parents think the school works closely with them and keeps them well informed though, in both cases, a substantial minority of those responding disagreed. The team could find no real reasons for some parents' rather negative perceptions regarding their links with the school which, in general, are effective. The school is good at consulting parents, for example through its recent questionnaire, and when developing new policies or documentation that may affect them, such as the new home-school contracts. These agreements were introduced in September 1999; it is too early to establish their effectiveness. The school holds regular parents' meetings and actively encourages informal contact from parents at any time. Notable features of the school's provision are the parent-tutor consultation evening in the autumn term, to review how well each pupil is coping with the demands of the new academic year, and the mentoring scheme for pupils needing additional support. Parents are invited to a wide range of musical and dramatic productions, sporting events, and other activities. The Arnewood Association holds social and fund-raising activities which have raised some money for children's benefit. However, its activities are not particularly well supported.

57. The school also keeps parents well informed. A highlight of its communication is its very attractive Internet website. Written information for parents, although comprehensive, is occasionally rather dull. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are informative. The homework diary contains a calendar of events for the year and a regular monthly newsletter keeps parents up-to-date. There is a clear booklet on choosing subject options at the end of Year 9.

58. Annual reports to parents on pupils' progress are satisfactory. Parents are generally happy with the amount of detail provided by the reports, which meet statutory requirements. In some cases, however, teachers are not sufficiently explicit in setting out strategies for improvement. Pupils' reports are properly reviewed with parents at parents' evenings. Attendance is satisfactory, but the school has set targets to improve it. Parents are formally invited and actively encouraged to attend the annual reviews for pupils with statements of special educational need. They are provided with good information about the progress their children are making and are kept fully informed of the support strategies used by the school. Parents speak very highly and appreciatively of the way in which their children are integrated into the school and the progress they make both academically and socially.

59. The contribution of parents to children's learning at home and at school is good. Parents have the opportunity to keep themselves informed of their children's homework and to support day-to-day progress through the homework diary. They are encouraged to use it to maintain a dialogue with the school; most tutors check assiduously to ensure that they do. Currently a very limited number of parent volunteers work in school, mainly in sports coaching, though parents respond well to requests to give lifts to outside events. The school is currently working on ways to increase the number of volunteers.

60. The last inspection report noted that formal links with parents were well developed and that parents valued the open-door policy of the school. Support for the Arnewood Association was variable. This situation appears to have been sustained.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. Overall, the school is led and managed well. In the relatively short time since his appointment, the headteacher has provided positive and effective leadership in a pleasant, consultative manner. He has a very clear vision for the school, wishing to sustain Arnewood as a high performing centre of learning, whilst aiming for excellence in teaching and learning and from links with the local community. This vision is under-pinned by the school's aims, which are reflected clearly in all aspects of its work, not least in the high academic standards, in the very good relationships that exist within the school and in the good community links. Teachers share the headteacher's commitment to high standards; expectations of pupils are high, promoting very good achievement and good standards of behaviour throughout the school.

62. The headteacher has already put in place a number of very good new initiatives, resulting from an initial, perceptive analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses and from those key issues identified in the last Ofsted report that had not been acted upon effectively. For example, the last report stated that more whole staff involvement in decision making was desirable. To pursue this issue, and to ensure that new plans to raise standards further are carried through effectively, the headteacher has very skilfully created a temporary, extended management team of nine people. This team appears to be functioning well at present, but it is too new to judge its impact on standards. Members of the team welcome the opportunity to be more openly involved in the management of the school. However, the headteacher is aware that not all staff are yet fully in tune with a very different management style to that experienced in the past.

63. Roles and responsibilities of senior managers are clear; however, in some instances, these are not carried out as effectively as they might be. For example, one such instance is that several of the areas for improvement identified by this inspection are the responsibility of a senior manager. The leadership and management skills of middle managers vary considerably but, overall, faculties and departments are led and managed well. However, faculty arrangements for the arts, whereby each of art, music, physical education and drama is attached to a different faculty, are ineffective in helping to promote an identity for the arts within the school. Mathematics and art are led very well; management of these subjects promotes very high achievement and consistently strong GCSE results. Leadership of English is satisfactory. Although, in general, examination results in English are well above the national average, results are not as strong as those in mathematics and science. This situation is recognised by the head of faculty, but a clear management plan to remedy the situation is not yet fully in place. Leadership and management of information technology and music are unsatisfactory; most pupils do not achieve as well as they should in these subjects. In all other subjects, leadership and management are good and contribute to the better than expected progress made by pupils. Co-ordination of the GNVQ programme is satisfactory. The special needs co-ordinator provides very good leadership. She has established good working relationships with colleagues and a strong team spirit. Her enthusiasm, and that of her colleague teacher, is infectious and they provide very good support by teaching small groups and helping pupils in classrooms.

64. Governors are very supportive of the school; they are well informed through regular reports from the headteacher and the finance officer and from presentations by heads of faculty. The headteacher has regular and effective contact with the various committees, which governors have set up to help them fulfil their statutory duties; senior managers are not involved on a regular basis. Governors try hard to ensure that all statutory requirements are met and are largely successful. They are aware that, although over 1000

pupils attend an assembly daily, full requirements for collective worship remain unmet. In addition, curricular requirements for information technology are not met fully at Key Stage 4 and there are some unintentional omissions from the school's prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents. Governors are increasingly involved in shaping the future direction of the school and in monitoring the school's provision. For example, a statistical audit is undertaken annually to give governors information on a range of quantitative aspects of school life, such as detentions, lateness, attendance, the environment and so on.

65. Overall, the school's strategies for monitoring and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of its provision are satisfactory, as is the action taken to remedy perceived weaknesses. However, these aspects of its work are not strongly developed; the new headteacher has already instigated discussions to consider effective strategies for 'self-evaluation'. In some ways, the school monitors and evaluates its academic standards well. Good use is made of standardised test information by departments to predict performance at GCSE, to compare predicted and actual performance and to identify any gender imbalance. This information is also used effectively to set appropriate targets for pupils and year groups, to monitor progress towards these targets and to monitor and evaluate the performance of different subjects. However, the school has yet to consider the use of recent statistical information that would allow a more rigorous evaluation of its overall performance against all schools nationally and against schools with similar intakes, in terms of both pupils' socio-economic circumstances and their attainment on entry.

66. A planned programme of classroom observations to monitor the quality of teaching was planned for this academic year, but staffing difficulties have restricted its implementation. Although the headteacher and most subject managers have good, informal knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching within their areas of control, an effective way to evaluate teaching consistently, and to share the considerable good practice which exists more widely amongst staff, has yet to be agreed. Monitoring of the implementation of most school policies is adequate but the evaluation of the impact of certain policies on pupils' learning is unsatisfactory. For example, although the headteacher samples pupils' work regularly to inform himself of standards and the quality of marking, there are no clear strategies in place to evaluate the impact of the school's assessment practice on the quality of pupils' learning and to share effective practice with staff. In contrast, the work of the learning support team is monitored very well. Considered evaluation is made of the effectiveness of provision. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a clear idea of future developments and is committed to taking them forward.

67. The headteacher has used the information gained from his analysis of standards and the quality of teaching, together with that gained from consultation with parents, staff and pupils, to identify appropriate priorities for development. These are well summarised in a medium term development plan, which incorporates a detailed development plan for this academic year, departmental development plans and an action plan to meet key issues identified in the last Ofsted report. Until this academic year, there were few formal written plans detailing the action the school took to achieve its undoubted success. The newly constituted annual plan is a very useful tool to guide development and to provide a common sense of purpose for the school's work. It identifies appropriate whole school priorities and is underpinned by detailed departmental plans, providing a cohesive approach to both curriculum development and the development of other aspects of school life. There are clear criteria against which the success of the plan in improving provision can be evaluated; it is too new to comment on the success of its evaluation in determining future action and in raising standards.

68. The high quality learning seen in classrooms indicates that, in general, pupils are benefiting from well-targeted spending. Teachers are deployed appropriately; good use is made of their expertise so that most of the teaching is good or very good. The team of individual needs assistants is highly valued and deployed well; they are skilled at using the targets on individual education plans to help pupils develop their basic skills. Other curriculum support staff provide a valuable service; for example, skilful use of the art technician enhances the curricular opportunities offered to pupils considerably. Spending on learning resources is high; however, this has resulted in at least satisfactory resources to support learning in almost all subjects. The exception is information technology, where spending has not provided adequate access to computers for many subject departments. Teachers make good use of available resources to stimulate pupils' interest and to enhance learning.

69. The current school development plan is fully costed and provides a very good framework for ensuring that spending decisions are governed, as far as is possible, by the school's educational priorities. However, on appointment, the headteacher was faced with staffing levels that are unrealistic in the context of a diminishing budget allocation. He has already taken steps to address this issue; for example, by reducing staff through natural wastage, by rationalising sixth form provision and by seeking ways to generate additional income. However, he and governors are aware that the key financial priority for the near future is to achieve a balanced budget, under-pinned by sufficient and sustainable levels of teaching and non-teaching staff. The school is currently spending more money than it is allocated; for the moment, it can resolve the matter by using the money that it has carried forward from previous years. There are longer-term financial plans in terms of likely pupil numbers, projected income and its implications. However, the school's financial planning skills, in response to reduced income, have yet to be proven.

70. There is effective financial control and administration. Two recent audit reports confirm that appropriate systems are in place and that specific grants are used for the purposes intended; minor recommendations in one report have been implemented. Appropriately detailed information is provided for the headteacher, for governors and for relevant teaching staff as required. The governors' finance committee meets regularly to oversee financial matters and to monitor spending. The budget for special educational needs is identified carefully; plans for spending for this year indicate that it will be used well. Day-to-day administration is very good; the school functions very smoothly due to loyal support from its administrative, financial and site staff. However, problems with the electronic recording of attendance are making unnecessary demands on the time of clerical staff and on the pastoral team at all levels.

71. The school is starting to evaluate the impact of its spending decisions effectively, influenced by the principles of best value. The school compares its spending patterns with those of other grant maintained schools; increasingly, it is using local and national data to compare and evaluate its expenditure against that occurring in schools nationally. The school is aware that it allocates rather more on staffing in the sixth form than is provided for in the funding formula. However, there are strategic reasons for this imbalance, not least the fact that the school views the continued development of its sixth form as crucial to its longer-term success. The headteacher is taking steps to reduce this imbalance, whilst trying to maintain the quality of provision. The expected procedures are in place to ensure that improvements to services and building are undertaken at the optimum financial rate. Increasingly, major spending decisions result from consultation with staff, governors, parents and pupils. For example, the not insignificant amounts to be spent improving pupils' toilet facilities are in part the result of representations by pupils through the school council.

72. There are at least sufficient, appropriately qualified and experienced teaching and support staff to meet almost all curriculum needs, except those in modern foreign languages where, in recent years, disruption due to absence through illness and other factors has affected continuity and standards of work adversely. In-service training for staff is of satisfactory quality overall, although reduced funding for the current year has greatly reduced opportunities for staff development. The school suitably monitors the value of courses attended by teachers, but no formal evaluation takes place centrally of the effect of in-service training on teaching and learning. Formal procedures for staff appraisal and review are in place, but appraisal is not fully implemented as some teachers have withdrawn from the scheme. There is a well-organised and effective induction programme for newly qualified teachers; statutory requirements are met, with the support given by the subject induction tutors considered especially valuable. The school is in partnership as a provider of Initial Teachers Training with Brighton University and the Open University. Arrangements are satisfactory, but their quality is not formally evaluated; the professional mentor, who has oversight of arrangements, is not given a time allowance for any of the duties incurred.

73. There is sufficient accommodation for teaching the school's curriculum. The environment is maintained well and respected by pupils; this results in appropriate areas for learning across the school. Accommodation is good in religious education, modern languages and science; in these subjects, provision provides a stimulating learning environment, enhanced by good display of pupils' work. Accommodation is also good for physical education. The school is accommodated on a pleasant, open site, which provides a good environment for sport and outside activities. The sports facilities are enhanced by an excellent, joint use, school and community sports centre, which includes a swimming pool. This is well used by both the school and local community. Accommodation is satisfactory for all other subjects except design and technology, where it is unsatisfactory. This subject is taught in three separate locations. This has a negative impact on professional communication within the department. There is some water ingress and building defects within the department's reception block, resulting in a depressing learning environment. The range of learning support that can be offered is limited by the lack of a base room. The learning support department does not have a room where they can display work or books and other learning resources. This severely curtails an open-door policy where pupils can gather to seek advice, or reassurance, on matters such as homework or reading or spelling difficulties.

74. Spending on learning resources for both this year and the preceding year is high, being well above the upper quartile nationally. The adequacy of learning resources for the school's curriculum is satisfactory in all subjects. It is good in art, modern foreign languages and music. The equipment in physical education for pupils with special needs is excellent and enhances their learning significantly. However, information technology resources are insufficient for the needs of the school. Although £30,000 was spent last year, the ratio of computers to pupils remains below the national figure.

75. The library has been enhanced as a resource centre with Internet, Intranet and CD ROM facilities. It is well used throughout the school day. Subject departments are beginning to use it more often, particularly science and art. Year 7 recently completed a history project on Ancient Rome, based around the task of writing a tourist guide to Rome.

76. The last report identified two key issues for managing the school. One was to ensure that there is a strategic view for whole school planning, closely linked to departmental planning. There is little evidence to indicate that satisfactory progress was

made in this respect until the issue was addressed by the current headteacher. Another key issue was to review and revise the overall management structure and responsibilities of senior and middle managers. Some progress was made on this front, in that heads of faculty were given whole school tasks to carry out. Recently, this process has been extended by the headteacher's use of nationally agreed criteria to help middle managers understand their role and evaluate their own performance. Minor points mentioned in the previous report have again been rectified recently. The headteacher and the finance officer, in regular monthly meetings, monitor spending on learning resources. Photocopying cards are now in every department to ensure economy in the use of worksheets.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

77. Within the context of a highly performing school with well above average standards, the governing body, senior and middle managers and other staff should seek to raise standards still further. They should:

- (1) Improve the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work by:
 - developing further the use of criteria against which those with positions of responsibility can evaluate their work;
 - making more effective use of national information against which the school's results can be evaluated;
 - clarifying and developing procedures for monitoring teaching, in order to share the considerable good practice which exists within the school;
 - evaluating the impact of school procedures and policies on pupils' learning more rigorously;
 - ensuring that the action to be taken to overcome weaknesses is agreed clearly.

(See paragraphs 38, 49, 65, 66, 72, 92)
- (2) Improve the use of information technology across the curriculum, to improve both pupils' information technology skills and learning in subjects by:
 - ensuring all subjects have appropriate access to information technology resources for cross-curricular work;
 - incorporating the use of information technology into subject planning;
 - developing the management of information technology to promote its use within the school more effectively and to monitor and evaluate what is actually taught;
 - ensuring that statutory requirements for the teaching of information technology are met fully.

(See paragraphs 7, 11, 63, 68, 74, 86, 106, 113, 119, 132, 141, 145, 148, 157)
- (3) Improve standards in music by:
 - improving teaching at Key Stage 3;
 - improving planning for continuity and progression across the key stages;
 - improving aspects of the strategic management of the department.

(See paragraphs 6, 11, 30, 63, 158, 159, 163, 164)

(4) Improve curricular provision at both key stages and post-16 by:

- agreeing a rationale for the curriculum;
- evaluating the diversity of provision against this rationale;
- reviewing provision for art, music and physical education, particularly at Key Stage 3;
- implementing a consistent approach to the teaching of literacy across the school and ensuring that subjects identify how these skills are to be taught and developed.

(See paragraphs 26, 29, 30, 31, 35, 42, 90)

78. Other minor weaknesses, which should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan, are to be found in paragraphs 17, 24, 32, 58, 63, 64, 69, 70, 73, 80, 88, 89, 91, 92, 113, 119, 127, 133, 171.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 235 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 75 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 3 | 30 | 38 | 26 | 3 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 1266 | 204 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 109 | |

| Special educational needs | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 18 | 1 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 193 | 1 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 11 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 9 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 57 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 6.5 |
| National comparative data | 7.9 |

| Unauthorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.5 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 115 | 133 | 248 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 71 | 94 | 88 |
| | Girls | 98 | 92 | 94 |
| | Total | 169 | 186 | 182 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 68 (65) | 75 (77) | 73 (73) |
| | National | 63 (65) | 62 (60) | 55 (56) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 40 (30) | 53 (53) | 41 (41) |
| | National | 28 (35) | 38 (36) | 23 (27) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 73 | 98 | 91 |
| | Girls | 93 | 100 | 92 |
| | Total | 166 | 198 | 183 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 66 (51) | 80 (81) | 73 (73) |
| | National | 64 (62) | 64 (64) | 60 (62) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 33 (18) | 64 (56) | 33 (43) |
| | National | 31 (31) | 37 (37) | 28 (31) |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 118 | 115 | 233 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified | Boys | 72 | 118 | 120 |
| | Girls | 83 | 110 | 114 |
| | Total | 155 | 228 | 234 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 65 (64) | 98 (99) | 100 (99) |
| | National | 46.3 (44.6) | 90.7 (89.8) | 95.7 (95.2) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 48 (47) |
| | National | 37.8 (36.8) |

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 46 | 53 | 99 |

| Average A/AS points score per candidate | For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent | | | For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent | | |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| School | 23.5 | 20.6 | 22 (21) | 0 | 2.7 | 2.3 (4) |
| National | 17.7 | 18.1 | 17.9 (17.5) | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.8 (2.8) |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 2 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 3 |
| Indian | 1 |
| Pakistani | 1 |
| Bangladeshi | 2 |
| Chinese | 7 |
| White | 1452 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 2 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 29 | 0 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|------------------------------------------|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 90.0 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 16.3 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 23 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 512 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 78 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 23.8 |
| Key Stage 4 | 22.3 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1998-1999 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--------------------------------------------|---------|
| Total income | 409126 |
| Total expenditure | 3957502 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2691 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 84441 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 218203 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 1470 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 268 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 28 | 59 | 10 | 3 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 34 | 58 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 19 | 62 | 9 | 2 | 8 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 18 | 60 | 16 | 5 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 26 | 67 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 20 | 47 | 25 | 8 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 33 | 56 | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 49 | 44 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 18 | 45 | 25 | 8 | 5 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 22 | 59 | 6 | 1 | 12 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 26 | 58 | 9 | 2 | 5 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 28 | 46 | 12 | 3 | 11 |

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

ENGLISH

79. Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have shown a significant upward trend over the last three years. In 1999, the average points score for English was well above the national average for all schools and close to the national average for similar schools. However, whilst the percentage of pupils gaining higher than expected levels for their age was well above the national average, the percentage of pupils gaining the expected level for their age was only close to the national average.

80. In GCSE English in 1999, 69 per cent of candidates gained a grade A* to C, well above the national average for all schools. Results in English literature were closer to the national average; 66 per cent of pupils gained grades A* to C, compared with 60 per cent nationally. School results in both subjects compare better with national results than in 1998, but less well than in 1997. Boys perform less well than girls in GCSE, reflecting a national trend, although the gap is less pronounced than nationally. Over the past three years, pupils' performance in English has not been particularly strong when compared with that in other subjects.

81. In A level English literature, 45 per cent of pupils achieved grades A or B in 1999, compared with 36 per cent nationally. These results represent an improvement in performance compared with the previous two years.

82. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average overall. Gifted and higher attaining pupils, and lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, achieve well at Key Stage 3. Achievement for middle attainers is satisfactory; most achieve standards as expected for their age. Good progress is made where teachers have high expectations, plan work according to individual needs and achieve a balance between providing information and challenging pupils to take some responsibility for developing their own learning. Standards of work at Key Stage 4 are better in English than in English literature, substantiating examination evidence. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory; most make at least expected progress in class. Sixth form pupils make good progress and achieve good standards in class as well as in examinations. For example, their writing skills are well developed, especially their ability to analyse a range of evidence.

83. At all key stages, pupils identify and comment on techniques used by writers to achieve particular effects on readers, such as choices in vocabulary and imagery. Many pupils, including some lower attainers, read fluently and confidently, and with appropriate expression. Pupils display high levels of sensitivity to writers' ideas and concerns and locate information efficiently; for example, low attainers in Year 9 showed very good skimming and scanning skills in responding to a non-fiction text about a teenager leaving home.

84. In spoken English, pupils sustain discussions and develop arguments; for example, a Year 13 group held an extended debate on the nature of 'nothingness', when studying the poetry of Thom Gunn. Pupils listen sympathetically and respectfully to each other and to their teachers. Lower attainers in Year 9 were able to explore orally the nature of relationships in *Romeo and Juliet*; pupils in Year 11 showed a sensitive awareness in discussion of the plight of a nineteenth-century emigrant to Australia, as recounted in a poem. Key Stage 4 and sixth form pupils write cogently and coherently, and question,

discuss and debate confidently. These skills have improved since the last inspection.

85. In their personal writing, pupils use a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical constructions to convey ideas and feelings. However, many pupils are less good at sequencing ideas, or at developing them at length, in non-narrative writing. At Key Stage 4, pupils are often reluctant to suggest their own interpretations of texts, relying heavily on what they are told by teachers. Awareness of the qualities of different genres is underdeveloped, for example, of how a drama text is different from prose fiction. High attainers in Year 11 responded well to an exercise on *An Inspector Calls*. They showed good awareness of character in the context of the social, cultural and historical background to the text, but were unsuccessful in finding ways to explore other devices used to convey the text's message.

86. Written work is sometimes spoiled by careless presentation and lack of revision or proof-reading. Opportunities for using information technology are limited at Key Stage 3. Word-processing is more frequently used to enhance work at Key Stage 4, although this often depends on pupils having access to computing facilities at home. Limited opportunities to use information technology for research, and for planning and drafting, restrict the development of pupils' presentational skills and hinder the development of independent research and study skills.

87. The quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall; in around a third of lessons seen, it was good or very good. Teaching is good in the sixth form. The best teaching makes pupils think for themselves and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills to new situations or demands; for example, when Year 11 pupils applied previously-learned ways of reading poetry to exploring new texts. When teaching is good, planning is thorough; lessons proceed at a lively pace and include a variety of activities that sustain pupils' concentration. Teachers use questions effectively to probe and extend pupils' responses. In less successful lessons, there is too much direction by the teacher, with little opportunity for pupils to think for themselves, and too little demand in the tasks set, so that pupils lose interest and fail to develop their learning. At Key Stage 4, pupils are sometimes provided with too much information about literary texts, so that they become dependent on the teacher's notes and undervalue their own personal responses. This partially explains why English literature results are somewhat lower than might be expected and is an aspect of departmental practice which has not shown improvement since the last inspection.

88. Standards of literacy are above average overall, but are not developed consistently in all subjects. Pupils produce a range of writing for different purposes and audiences in English, design and technology and science, including good quality extended reports at Key Stage 4. Very good examples of extended writing were seen in the work of Year 11 pupils in modern foreign languages and in religious education, but extended writing is less well developed in some other subjects, such as geography, history and art. While lists of subject-specific vocabulary are displayed in all classrooms, the frequency of references to them is variable. Teachers' expectations of presentation are inconsistent; some accept substandard work.

89. The reading demands placed upon pupils also vary. At Key Stage 3 in English and history, good emphasis is given to developing skills such as skimming and scanning. In design and technology, reading is an important element of research in the design process. However, the limited use of information technology across the curriculum means that pupils make insufficient use of Internet texts. Pupils' oracy skills are good across the curriculum; pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are able to sustain and support points of view and listen

sensitively to each other, showing respect for different ideas and opinions, while sixth form pupils engage in detailed and sophisticated discussions.

90. Steps to establish a coherent whole-school approach to literacy have been taken recently, but a number of different strategies are used. While many of these are effective, nobody has a strategic overview that would help to ensure that pupils' literacy skills are developed consistently across the curriculum.

91. In most lessons, pupils behave well and have good relationships with each other and with the teacher. They are supportive and sensitive listeners, showing respect for others' views. When encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, they respond with motivation, direction and commitment. Most pupils show sustained concentration and enjoy the work they do. The start of lessons is sometimes made difficult by the late arrival of pupils; if the purpose of the lesson is not made clear to the latecomers, they are occasionally slow to settle to work.

92. Management of the English faculty is satisfactory overall, but some aspects are unsatisfactory. For example, while a range of strategies to raise standards at Key Stage 3 has been implemented successfully, there is not yet a strategic view of how results at Key Stage 4, especially in English literature, could be similarly improved through setting challenging, but realistic, targets. There is no formal programme of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning through classroom observation, in order to identify and share good practice.

Drama

93. Standards are good throughout the school. In 1999, 79 per cent of candidates achieved grades A* to C in GCSE drama, well above the national figure of 67 per cent; results were strong compared with pupils' other GCSE examination grades. The number of candidates for A level theatre studies has increased over the past three years; results have shown an upward trend. In 1999, all eleven candidates gained an A to E grade, with five gaining grades A or B. These results compare favourably with national performance in drama subjects.

94. Standards achieved in lessons are above those expected nationally at both key stages and in the sixth form. Pupils plan sensibly in groups and convey character convincingly, through the language and movements they use in scripted or improvised performances. They respond well to challenge, for example, Year 8 pupils working within the convention of Commedia Dell Arte or Year 9 pupils improvising scenes in which characters have to portray one of the seven deadly sins. Sixth form pupils respond well to probing questions by giving detailed explanations of how the director's and actors' decisions can affect a live performance and its impact on an audience.

95. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work, and set a demanding pace in all lessons. Pupils at Key Stage 3 are expected to achieve a great deal in a short time, and they respond with enthusiasm and commitment. GCSE candidates in Year 11 show honesty and sensitivity when evaluating each other's performances. Because pupils enjoy the challenge of drama lessons, behaviour is always good, and is sometimes very good or excellent. Pupils are justly proud of what they achieve.

96. Management of the department is good. There are detailed schemes of work; monitoring and evaluation of results and practice are successful. Teachers are aware of each other's approaches and share good practice. A limited budget is deployed skilfully to provide appropriate resources to support the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

97. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 national tests, the average points score for mathematics was well above the national average for all schools and well above that for similar schools. In addition, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level for their age, and the proportion attaining high levels for their age, were both above comparative national averages. These outcomes were similar to those for the past two years. There has been little difference in the performance of boys and girls. 1999 results were better than those for English and similar to those in science.

98. At GCSE in 1999, standards were well above the national average for grades A* to C, and were similar to those for 1998. Boys and girls attained equally well. In recent years, results have been significantly better than those in English and science and, indeed, have been stronger than those for most other subjects. Pupils from the top set, who are selected for early entry, achieve very good results; similarly, pupils from the second set, who additionally take GCSE statistics, achieve well, given the reduced time available to them for these studies. The policy of early entry for the top set in Year 10 has an effect on results; the school would undoubtedly have a much higher figure for the top grades if early entrants remained in the GCSE course for a further year.

99. At A level in 1999, all pupils obtained A to E grades, better than the national average and an improvement on the previous year. Results for the higher grades are similar to national figures. Results in further mathematics are also pleasing and similar to those for 1998.

100. Attainment on entry to the school is slightly above national average, with fewer of the highest attainers, but more of the just above average attainers, than is seen in the national average entry profile. The well-above average examination and test results thus demonstrate that pupils achieve very well in mathematics; they are helped to make very good progress across both key stages and in the sixth form.

101. Inspection of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm that, at the end of both key stages and of Year 13, pupils attain significantly higher standards than expected for their age and achieve very well. Standards of numeracy are generally very good, though a small but significant fraction of younger pupils do not know their tables and number bonds thoroughly. Pupils are encouraged to use calculators sensibly and appropriately. This is good practice and helps to develop mental skills further. Basic mathematical skills are reinforced effectively in several areas of the curriculum. In science and in geography, graphs and calculations are used appropriately and effectively. Accurate measurement, including weighing, is performed in design and technology and good use is also made of concepts of space and shape in art. Particularly effective use is made of data handling skills in vocational courses in the sixth form.

102. Pupils achieve well in all attainment targets although, occasionally, standards of reading detract from pupils' ability to understand test and examination questions. Some very good examples of investigative work were seen on classroom walls; a particularly successful Year 11 investigation into permutations demonstrated growing analytical skills in modelling. Work in data handling is of a generally high standard; pupils enjoy using real

world data. Surveys, and their analysis, motivate many pupils. Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve appropriately.

103. Standards of work in post-16 lessons are well above course expectations; pupils achieve very well. They develop powers of analysis, which enable them to apply techniques to complex situations. With many pupils coming through the fast track entry in Year 10, followed by an early introduction to A level in Year 11, a challenging pace of learning is already established as the norm. Particularly high standards were seen in a Year 13 class moving towards an understanding of de Moivre's Theorem. Pupils handled multiplication and division of complex numbers with great confidence.

104. Teaching in the faculty is a strength. Teaching overall is very good; almost all that observed was at least good. Teaching in the sixth form is particularly strong; the tutorial style is very effective with pupils, who generally love the challenge of the subject. Pupils are expected to work hard and to do their best. It is assumed that good behaviour is the norm. Consequently pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and participate enthusiastically in class question and answer sessions. They enjoy working with partners and generally maintain attention for the whole lesson. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and thus exercise apparently effortless control. They pace lessons very well, as was seen in a very successful Year 8 lesson with several special educational needs pupils in the group. The teacher kept pupils on their toes throughout, with good changes of activity and a full-of-fun approach to learning. In another successful lesson, with a lower attaining Year 11 class, the teacher had clearly built up an expectation of hard work. In the lesson, pupils successfully built up their confidence in the analysis of types of rotational symmetry. Teachers generally vary activities to maintain interest though, in a less successful lesson, too much time was spent on the introductory session. Teachers use resources effectively; in some lessons, particularly good use was made of computers and of graphic calculators to interest and motivate pupils. Effective use of information technology was seen in a middle attaining Year 11 class reviewing plots of linear equations. Pupils visibly gained a deeper understanding of the significance of slope, by plotting 10 different slopes using computers. Similarly, a skilful demonstration, using a graphic calculator, allowed a higher attaining group in Year 9 to understand an iterative method for solving problems by trial and improvement and to do the iterations themselves.

105. The high quality teaching enables all pupils to achieve very well. Learning in lessons is mostly at least good and often very good. Pupils enjoy learning and using mathematics. Often progress is consolidation of previous skills and understanding. For example, in a successful Year 13 lesson, pupils successfully learned to apply their previous skills in applied mechanics to a new problem, involving the collision of the Titanic and its iceberg. Year 9 pupils with special educational needs consolidated their knowledge of multiplication tables by using computer programmes, which challenged them to do better in table tests. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress generally. When questioned, all appreciated using information technology and seeing improvement in their test scores as enjoyable and beneficial to their understanding of mathematics.

106. The faculty is led and managed very well. Staff work together very effectively as a team, with the common aim of maximising the attainment of all of their pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to go further and give very freely of their time. The various Mathematics Challenges and extra classes after school are well supported throughout the school. Assessment is used very well, in both the short and long term, to monitor and evaluate standards and to plan future learning. At Key Stage 4, teachers use their pupil profiles effectively to guide pupils towards individual targets. This process is being extended into Year 9. Group target setting is also used very effectively at Key Stages 3 and 4. Thus,

pupils know where they are and how they are doing. The early entry policy in Year 10 is generally successful. Pupils feel they are being stretched and find the path to A level is made easier for them. Information technology was identified at the previous inspection as being under-utilised. The faculty is now using it more routinely but there is a need to formally incorporate it into the schemes of work for both key stages. The present equipment is barely adequate given that the vast majority of pupils have personal computers at home.

107. The faculty has made good progress since the previous inspection. Teaching is now largely good or very good. Standards have improved and information technology is beginning to be used appropriately.

SCIENCE

108. Standards in the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 tests were well above the national average, maintaining the high standards achieved in the previous two years. In comparison with similar schools, performance was well above average. The performance of boys was above that of girls, although for both sexes, standards were high. Most pupils are entered for a double award science GCSE examination at the end of Year 11. In 1999, the school also entered a group of pupils, who had already achieved A*-C grades at the end of Year 10, for three separate science GCSEs. It also entered another group of such pupils for an accelerated course in advanced supplementary (AS) science. Nearly all pupils entered at the end of Year 10 for double award science gained grades A*-C, with a high proportion of A*. Pupils who took the double award science GCSE in 1999 performed above the national average and, overall, standards in GCSE double award science and the separate sciences were above national averages. Results in previous years have been consistently above national averages and have risen in line with the national trend. The 23 Year 11 pupils taking the AS examination in 1999 however, only gained two grades, although the view of the pupils is that the course helped them to prepare well for science A level courses in Year 12. In recent years, performance in GCSE science has been very similar to that in many other subjects. Pupils taking A level science gain above average higher grades, although the smaller numbers involved do not allow statistically significant comparisons to be made. Overall, standards in tests and examinations are above average.

109. Generally, standards of work in lessons are at, or above, the level expected for the group and, in a significant minority, are well above. An upper set of Year 7 pupils showed very detailed knowledge of simple electrical circuits and could make many sensible predictions about the current flowing in different parts of the circuit. Pupils in a low Year 11 set showed a good understanding of the penetration of radiation through different materials and could make suggestions about the use of radiation in manufacturing processes. Pupils in another low set in Year 11 were able to appreciate and be surprised by the enormous length of time since life originated on Earth, through a simple but effective teaching strategy. These pupils also showed intelligent interest in the evolutionary ideas of Charles Darwin and discussed these ideas amongst themselves. However, pupils' written work in the middle range of attainment is sometimes poorly presented and does not convey the level of understanding shown by pupils in lessons. On the other hand, the written work and coursework of upper sets are very well presented, often using good word processing skills. Work by sixth form pupils is at or above the expectation of the course. High standards were noted for example in chemistry, where pupils had a good depth of knowledge about protein synthesis and structure and in physics, when pupils had to explain the behaviour of objects in induced magnetic fields. The performance of girls is not notably different to that of boys and they participate fully in discussions and practical work in science. Standards are at least in line with and in some aspects are above those reported in the last inspection.

There are signs, though, that improvements may have levelled out in 1998-9 and this may make it difficult to achieve the departmental target of 70 per cent A* to C grades in GCSE science, but it is an appropriate and realistic challenge.

110. Pupils of all levels of achievement have very good attitudes to their work, and all show a respect for and enjoyment of scientific knowledge and understanding. They work hard, accept that they are responsible for their own achievements and behave very well in lessons.

111. Overall, teaching is good. In well over half of the lessons observed, teaching was good or very good; only one lesson had unsatisfactory features. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and above all an enthusiasm for it, which is communicated to and appreciated by pupils. They show great willingness to help pupils do better and provide extra support outside lessons. In most lessons, teachers challenge pupils with good questions, which succeed in making pupils think and which probe misunderstandings. They use resources appropriately and imaginatively, for example, in the preparation of poster displays by pupils and in the building of models to clarify complex structures in biology and chemistry. However, teachers make insufficient use of information technology. The way in which pupils' work is assessed and marked motivates and encourages pupils. In a small minority of lessons, the use of questions was less effective and, in a couple of lessons, the teacher provided too much information for pupils to digest. Occasionally, there was insufficient testing of understanding of the whole class, when an individual had given a correct answer.

112. Teaching affects pupils in a very positive way; most achieve very well. The pace of lessons and the use of time help pupils to work to full effect, while the encouragement and support provided produce a feeling of self-confidence and a willingness by pupils to tackle difficult concepts. This contributes significantly to the standards achieved. Pupils are optimistic and objective about their own attainment and potential. Those with special educational needs achieve well under these conditions, not least because the teachers know them and their problems well, and adapt work when necessary.

113. Leadership of the department is good and, although the organisation of science teaching is by separate subjects, teaching promotes a coherent and unified view of science, which helps pupils to link concepts and to improve their attainment. The curriculum is appropriate to the attainment of pupils and the school is successful in its early entry policy for science GCSE. It has not, however, fully solved the problem of what course or courses to provide in Year 11 for those who have already attained good GCSE grades in Year 10. The science department monitors and evaluates its work effectively; it is successful in what it sets out to do and provides a good science education at all key stages. However there is insufficient use of or attention paid to the use of information technology to support learning in science, a negative feature which has persisted since the last inspection.

ART

114. GCSE A* to C results in 1999, at 81 per cent, were well above the national average. Although results fell somewhat from the excellent levels in 1997 and 1998, this was because numbers taking the subject at GCSE were noticeably higher, and the ability range was wider, than in previous years. Boys' results have been particularly high compared with national averages. Only small numbers of pupils have taken A level recently. Their results have been good, but statistical comparisons are invalid.

115. Pupils enter the school with an average range of competencies in art and showing a range of attitudes towards the subject. Curriculum organisation in Year 7 does not promote good progress; pupils are taught art for only a single 45 minute period each week. By the end of the year their attainment is only average. From Year 8, though, where they have double periods of art, pupils begin to achieve very well and to make very good progress in skills and understanding. By Year 9, standards of work are well above average. Lower attaining pupils mostly achieve the national expectation, with very good two and three-dimensional work seen in lower sets. Middle attainers achieve standards in most skills, especially in painting, which are above, or well above expectations. The many high attaining pupils in Year 9 often produce standards that are excellent for their age. In particular, they work well in enormous scale, using canvas and acrylic paint proficiently. Many paintings show an unusually high standard of skill, and of individual interpretation. The work of these higher attainers in Year 9 is already at a level expected for higher grades at GCSE.

116. These unusually high standards form the basis of excellent work from many pupils in Years 10 and 11. Using their experience, success and high levels of confidence in approaching work on a huge scale, many pupils' work throughout the key stage shows the quality expected for A level. A notable feature of these high standards is the almost professional excellence of textile screen printing, also on a very large scale. Pupils interpret very creatively the myriad of ideas generated from good visual research. Work is often also technically excellent. Large canvasses remain a great strength in submissions for GCSE.

117. Although very small groups have previously entered A level, recruitment was good last year. The present Year 12 A level standards are very high indeed. GNVQ pupils, who are taught together with A level, have much more mixed standards, in some cases adversely affected by lower motivation levels. Their practical work is mainly of the quality expected.

118. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teaching is never less than good, and much is excellent. Low-key and facilitational in style, teaching is highly effective in generating very high standards. Teachers' one-to-one discussions with pupils are the main method of communicating high expectations, including the expectation that pupils will be able to make decisions about their work for themselves from an early stage. This expectation contributes significantly to the very high degree of independence in learning, which is such a strength of the department. When pupils move into Key Stage 4, they have already developed an individuality of approach and response to stimulus. They are thus well placed to use available resources, many of which are quite unusual, to experiment widely, and to refine their technical skills. Relationships throughout the department, but particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, are mature and developmental. Pupils respond well to teachers' extraordinarily high expectations; many accept the challenges they are given as opportunities to achieve even higher standards. Pupils work very co-operatively at all stages, with good group work seen at Key Stage 3; A level and GNVQ pupils are mutually supportive. In many different ways, art contributes very significantly to pupils' self-development. Pupils' articulate discussions with adults, about the development of their work, is often impressive.

119. The art department has responded well to the last report. High standards have been maintained and, internally, departmental management is now good. Three-dimensional work is better integrated into the curriculum, though not all classes experience this equally. Sixth form work is well established, with A level showing very good standards. Monitoring and evaluation of the department's work are satisfactory. The first year of

GNVQ has yet to be evaluated intensively; it is difficult to manage the present joint-teaching arrangements within large A level groups. The current teaching team works well together, and the department uses the valuable services of a technician very effectively to increase the range of curricular opportunities. The criticisms in the last report relating to management of the department at school level have deteriorated further. They have been exacerbated by the fragmentation of the creative arts faculty and the inclusion of art in the humanities faculty. Whilst technology sized groups are very helpful for pupils' progress, setting arrangements, based on technology criteria, are not always supportive of learning in art. The key residual weakness, however, is the deterioration in the quality and availability of information technology in the department. Provision is poor. With the appointment of an experienced art and information technology teacher, the department urgently needs modern computers and appropriate software to raise the standards in this aspect of the curriculum to match the high standards in other aspects of art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

120. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments, nearly all Year 9 pupils were assessed to be at or above the level expected for their age. This compares with a national figure of around 60 percent of pupils. The faculty recognises that their assessments were inaccurate, being based on best figures rather than an aggregate of levels achieved. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, pupils attained grades across a range of design and technology examinations which, overall, were above national averages. Pupils did least well in graphic products and resistant materials. The grades awarded to boys were below the grades awarded to girls in every subject except systems and control, reflecting the national picture. The results for 1999 are evidence of an improving overall trend. However, results are affected adversely by the school's policy to enter all Year 11 pupils for GCSE, even when coursework has not been completed or a poor attendance record results in poor progress. In 1999, nine of the ten pupils entered for A level attained grades A or B. Their results were well above national averages and are an improvement on previous years.

121. In the workshop and workroom, Year 9 pupils attain standards that are in line with national expectations. Overall, pupils' achievements are as might be expected, although they make good progress at this key stage in both designing and making. Their subject knowledge and understanding are at least satisfactory. For example, in food technology, pupils have a sound understanding of the properties of the ingredients they are using and of the range of information contained in the labelling of products. They acquire a sound understanding of basic hygiene procedures, for example, as observed in a Year 9 investigation of "*cook and chill*" products. All pupils made good progress in developing their analytical skills, as they studied and compared a range of commercial products. Year 9 pupils, engaged in a project to make a "*jack in the box*", were confident in suggesting ways of improving the making process. Pupils work with reasonable accuracy and a desire to produce products that are well finished. They produce working drawings that are largely accurate and which are annotated with a suitable level of detail. In textiles in Year 9, pupils were making waistcoats from reclaimed materials; they made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials and of a sound range of techniques to join and to shape their products. Throughout the key stage, satisfactory drawing skills are developed. Higher ability Year 9 pupils demonstrated a good understanding of ways in which computers are used in control systems. Pupils use information technology effectively to model designs of systems and to test and to modify their ideas, and they successfully learn how to write linear programmes to control external events.

122. Year 11 pupils are achieving well. Standards of work are above national expectations, reflecting the 1999 examination results. In food technology, pupils

demonstrate good research skills as they work on individual projects. Their product development is good, drawing on a good knowledge of nutritional information. Pupils' work on gathering information using customer surveys is above expectations; most produce good detailed specifications for their products that include a good range of environmental considerations. Pupils in the systems and control classes produce specifications that clearly evolve from the initial brief. Their research is well focused and they make effective use of customer surveys to help develop their solutions. Over the key stage, standards of practical work, drawing and presentation of written work are good. Most pupils' folders show clear evidence of the progress they make in their projects, although the folders of some pupils following the resistant materials and graphic products courses are disorganised. Their progress in producing work to the standard required by the examination syllabus is not as well advanced as in the other subjects. In graphic products, pupils make very good use of sketching to develop and communicate design ideas. In resistant materials, there is good research, for example, in a project in which guinea pig feeders were tested extensively for functionality. In textiles, pupils responded well to challenge as they developed designs for do-it-yourself stores. They had developed a co-ordinated range of textile products and made good use of colour wheels and mood boards to model pattern and colour, producing some very good practical examples.

123. Year 13 pupils also achieve well, attaining standards that are above expectations. Pupils working on their individual projects used a good range of tools, equipment and processes to produce sound results. Their sketching was effective and they had a satisfactory knowledge of factors such as ergonomics. They offered a good range of solutions for their initial brief. Their product analysis is sound, as is their research into processes and techniques. Pupils following the textiles course derive good knowledge of designers and trends in fashion, from extensive research.

124. Teaching and learning are good throughout the faculty. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they impart effectively in introductions, in marking, and in feedback to pupils as they move around classes while pupils work. Teachers generally give clear, short introductions to make sure pupils can get straight down to work. They provide good levels of encouragement and challenge. Pupils respond very well and work hard to improve what they are doing. Pupils persevere when things prove difficult, such as when they were writing procedures in systems and control at Key Stage 3 and their initial drafts did not work. In other areas, too, when they encounter difficulties, pupils use a range of strategies successfully to overcome them, for example, as in the Key Stage 3 textiles course, when pupils were using reclaimable materials that presented unpredictable problems. Teachers are well-organised and are well prepared for lessons, with tools, equipment, ingredients all in place. They are well supported by very good technicians who work very well, despite a heavy workload. The resistant materials technician, for example, has to prepare materials and maintain tools and equipment for five workshops.

125. Teachers use humour well to engage and enthuse their classes. Good question and answer sessions occur when teachers encourage discussion and speculation. Teachers always stress safety in the working environment and spend an appropriate time on expert demonstrations. This improves learning, as pupils are always clear about what they have to do when using equipment. The good balance of practical and written work provided by teachers also promotes good learning. Appropriate use is made of homework to extend and reinforce learning. Pair and small group work promotes creativity by giving pupils opportunities to develop and test ideas through discussion with others. Teachers employ a successful variety of strategies to promote good learning for less able pupils and work well with classroom assistants who support these pupils. A level teaching is strong. There is very good support of a wide range of projects. One recent example is the design

and construction, by a very able Year 12 group, of a millennium beacon for a local church.

126. In child development, standards are at least in line with national expectations. Teaching is strong and pupils' learning is good. Teachers skilfully bring out a range of responses from pupils, who have developed knowledge and understanding of child development issues through, for example, caring for younger brothers or sisters. Pupils' listening and concentration are always good and effectively promote good learning.

127. Leadership and management are very good. The faculty analyses its results well and has identified strategies to improve performance in coming years. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of improvements in design and technology. There has been significant improvement in the teaching of research skills. Teaching is more consistent and revised schemes of work now provide full coverage of all aspects of the design process. However, accommodation is still unsatisfactory. The faculty has rooms in three different locations; this inhibits professional dialogue and adversely affects the ability of senior staff to deal with day-to-day problems as they arise.

GEOGRAPHY

128. Recent GCSE A* to C and A* to G results have been consistently well above average for both maintained secondary schools and similar schools. They have improved over time above the national trend. Girls achieve higher results than boys, in line with the national position, although boys perform especially well when compared with the performance of boys nationally. The subject is a very popular option at GCSE and GCE A level. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school, performance in recent years has been relatively strong. A level results overall, despite some variation in recent years, have been close to the national average.

129. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils have a sound grounding in geographical skills and vocabulary. They use and interpret maps well and have a satisfactory understanding of spatial and environmental issues. They have a good knowledge of world development, but lack practice in graphical representation of statistical data. Standards are significantly above those expected for pupils' age at the end of Key Stage 4. By Year 11, pupils can explain a range of physical and human processes competently. They rank and weight development indicators effectively and judge levels of development in selected countries. They also produce some high quality independent study project work, based on individual fieldwork. Standards in the sixth form are close to course expectations. Pupils generally organise themselves well and develop a sound grasp of geographical concepts and their application. Pupils with special needs achieve well, particularly when given specialist support, and produce work which is above that normally expected for their attainment levels. Overall, pupils' achievements are good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. They are more variable in the sixth form, being very good in Year 12 but only satisfactory in Year 13.

130. Teaching is a significant strength of the department, being of very good quality overall. Some excellent teaching was observed at Key Stages 3 and 4. Sixth form teaching was never less than good and was often very good. Teachers are very committed and supportive and relate positively to pupils. Classroom management and control are generally very good. The best teaching has clear and manageable aims, shared with pupils, and tested at the end of the lesson to assess the effectiveness of learning. Planning is detailed and imaginative; it encourages interest and offers a variety of suitable learning opportunities. Lessons have good pace and are presented in a way which challenges pupils, with high expectation for their achievement. In these lessons, teachers

have a secure knowledge of the subject matter taught; presentation is lively, dynamic and encourages genuine enjoyment of the subject, thereby promoting good learning. Teaching is well structured and focused. In the best lessons, a range of good visual aids is used effectively; well-chosen topical materials make understanding of lesson objectives clearer and within the pupils' experience.

131. This quality of teaching has a significant positive impact on the quality of learning. Pupils overwhelmingly display very positive attitudes and very good behaviour. Their ability to work co-operatively together when working in groups and the excellent rapport with teachers are major factors contributing to high standards of learning. Teaching helps pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills progressively throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 although, at times, key words are not emphasised sufficiently in lessons and insufficient attention is paid to pupils' needs when selecting materials and activities for lessons, including higher level extension work. Fieldwork greatly enriches studying; the best work is of very good quality. However, at Key Stage 3, pupils lack first hand experience of a physical environment outside the local area. Information technology is being planned within the course, but it has yet to be developed as a coherent skill programme linked directly to curricular themes.

132. The department is well organised and works efficiently. It is led well by an experienced and well-motivated head of department. Evaluation of the department's work is satisfactory, but it is aimed insufficiently at assessing how learning can be improved further. At present, learning is not consolidated by reinforcement of the main teaching points visually on the board, nor by the use of a large standing world map in each specialist classroom. Resources are generally good but there are some shortages that limit the range of learning opportunities, such as easy access to computers for teaching purposes and a low budget for fieldwork.

133. Overall, this is a strong and successful department. The previous inspection report identified much strength in teaching and learning and this has been developed further. The department has tackled the issue of over-directed study successfully, by increasing the level of enquiry work and by modifying teaching to include independent study in lessons. Study skills have improved, but further development of these skills and examination revision skills is still needed, particularly in the sixth form. The quality of marking is now generally sound, with some good practice but, sometimes, insufficient guidance is given to pupils about how they can improve their work. Pupils are unaware of the standard of their work in relation to examination levels. They need to be more fully involved in evaluating their own work and in setting targets to sustain progress.

HISTORY

134. Standards at age 14 are above average in that, in 1999, a larger than usual proportion of pupils reached high levels for their age in the end of Key Stage 3 national assessment. At GCSE, although results overall are in line with national averages, a large number pupils are awarded the highest grades. The trend since the last inspection is for an increase in the numbers of pupils taking the subject and a steady rise in results at the end of Key Stage 4. However, in 1999, boys' results were below the national average. A level results are well above national levels. In 1999, all twenty candidates passed and seven were awarded an A grade. The trend is for a higher pass rate and an impressive increase in the number of A grades.

135. During the inspection, standards of work at the end of Key Stage 3 were above those expected nationally for pupils' age. Departmental testing shows that some pupils

reach the highest level of attainment and acquire high levels of skills and knowledge. In lessons, pupils use a variety of extracts to find information about the past and to make judgements about cause and effect. By Year 9, pupils are able to understand the causes and results of the major developments of this century, including the impact of world war. A study of life in the trenches during the First World War enabled pupils in lower sets to empathise with the experience of people in the past and to understand how propaganda was used to persuade men to volunteer. Written work in all year groups is usually well presented and pupils' work includes examples of a wide variety of tasks. Some pupils make good use of computer-based research and are confident in retrieving information from the Internet, but few use word processing to present their work. Pupils of the highest ability levels make competent use of complex information and detailed sources; they have a good knowledge of the topics that they have studied. Although there are more boys than girls in the lower sets, there is no evidence of a marked level of underachievement.

136. Standards of work are above national expectations in GCSE classes, with pupils in upper sets showing both a detailed knowledge of the topics that they are studying and high levels of skill in essay and document work. Pupils in the lower sets answer and ask questions with confidence and, in doing so, they all show a secure level of knowledge and understanding. Many pupils are very articulate and are able to base their ideas and judgements on a careful study of extracts and source material, for example, when studying cartoons related to the political situation in Ireland in 1968. The highest attaining pupils were able to compare the situation of unrest in Ireland with that in the USA and France in the late 1960s. They also cope well with the recognition of bias in the evidence that they study. All pupils have a clear understanding of the different levels of response required to GCSE questions.

137. During the inspection, work in the sixth form was very good. Year 13 pupils showed that they are working in a way which will enable them to meet and possibly improve on their target grades. They showed confidence in their own judgement of different interpretations of the past, for example, when studying different views on the complexity of factors linking religious and political change in the seventeenth century. Most have a secure understanding of the major developments in political and social history related to a study of the development of the Radical movement in England and are able to compare and contrast the impact of eastern and western influences on medieval Russia. They are able to interpret difficult and challenging sources in preparation for classroom discussion and they consult a wide range of books in the planning and writing of essays.

138. Achievement is good in all year groups. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have acquired a secure grasp of all aspects of the subject. Those who choose to take the subject at GCSE make good progress in the acquisition of the knowledge content of the course and in developing skills in answering questions and completing course work. Pupils also make very good progress in some areas of the A level course, for example, in document-based work. Pupils' contributions in class show that they quickly adapt to the new way of working. Observation in the classrooms and discussions with individuals showed that pupils enjoy their work and an increasing number are choosing to study the subject at GCSE and A level.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve well due to good quality support and teachers' good knowledge of their individual learning plans.

139. Pupils learn well, due to good quality teaching overall and the positive attitudes of the great majority. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was always sound and often good or very good, especially in examination classes. Teachers' planning ensures that both skills and areas of knowledge are revisited as pupils progress through the school. For example, pupils in Year 7 study public hygiene and medicine as part of their work on the Roman Empire; this provides a secure foundation for early work on medicine as part of their GCSE work in Year 10. Teachers use a variety of approaches and set a variety of tasks. These sometimes make an effective contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills but, often, there is insufficient focus on the development of these skills. In some Key Stage 3 classes, because of the limited time available, the pace of the lessons is such that there is little time for pupils to reflect on what they have learned, or to develop skills in independent research. Drama and role play are used skilfully to increase the level of pupils' understanding.

140. All teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject and manage pupils well. Pupils are set by prior attainment for history, and different tasks and resources are used across the ability range. However, the department has not as yet developed an approach that enables individuals to succeed at their own level, by ensuring that pupils of varying ability within sets are given appropriate resources and tasks. For example, little use of group work was observed; the same textbook is often used across the ability range. The variety of resources and classroom activities is good and the teaching challenges the highest attainers very effectively. Teachers are particularly skilled in ensuring a high level of response from pupils in the lowest sets. Lessons have clear objectives, which focus on what pupils should have achieved by the end of each lesson. Good progress in learning is ensured by the quality of questioning in class, which is used effectively to review earlier work. Assessment is used very effectively and is a principal strength of the department's work. Assessment procedures are understood clearly by pupils. In examination classes, very careful monitoring of work by teachers makes a considerable contribution to pupils' progress.

141. Management of the subject is good. All pupils have the opportunity to go on visits to historic sites, museums and conferences and many go on visits abroad, for example, to visit sites in eastern Europe associated with the Holocaust. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. However, at present, it makes insufficient contribution to learning related to the use of information technology because pupils have no access to computers in the classroom. Since the last inspection, examination results have improved overall. A level has been introduced very successfully and the number of pupils choosing to take the subject has increased. The management of the subject is the responsibility of an enthusiastic teacher, who has developed a strong team ethos, ensuring that resources and assessment procedures are used very effectively to ensure progression and continuity. The monitoring and evaluation of results have raised standards within the history department.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

142. In the 1999 National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, nearly all pupils were assessed at, or above, the level expected for their age. This was well above national figures and is not reflected in the standards achieved by pupils during the inspection. It is the result of inaccurate gradings by teachers. In the 1999 GCSE office applications examinations, 66 per cent of candidates achieved grades A* to C, above the

national average. Results in A level computer studies were above average overall; nearly half of the candidates were awarded an A or B grade.

143. Inspection evidence indicates that, by the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain standards similar to national expectations. Pupils follow a comprehensive basic skills course and most become proficient in a range of applications of information technology. They can all use word processing and desktop publishing software competently; most have developed sound skills using a multimedia software package to present information. They are able to create databases, for example of their favourite television programmes, searching and reorganising the data with some confidence. Although they rarely use CD ROMs for research, pupils successfully use the school's Intranet, an information resource located in the school's computer network that uses the same format as the Internet. In this way, pupils acquire information technology research skills without the costs and risks normally associated with the Internet. Information technology teachers make sure that other problems associated with school use of the medium, such as the indiscriminate downloading of large amounts of information, are avoided. They teach pupils to select and summarise information; this helps to develop good independent learning skills. Pupils successfully enter data on a spreadsheet and use the software, for example, to alter data to model financial information. Some use music software to model musical information, such as melody and rhythm. Pupils can write programmes to operate an electronic mousetrap successfully. In science, they use light gates to measure the speed of a toy vehicle as it passes through them.

144. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils in the GCSE courses are achieving sound standards in relation to examination criteria. These courses are challenging and provide pupils with a wide range of information technology skills. Some GCSE pupils are producing projects of high quality, making good use of a range of software, including multimedia presentational packages. Projects are mainly drawn from realistic scenarios, for example, from the automation of stock control in a builders' merchants store. In their software solutions, pupils often use advanced techniques to link data in order to enhance the effectiveness of their systems. In the office applications course, pupils demonstrate sound keyboard skills, which help to promote good learning through reducing the time taken to enter information. They are competent in using a range of industry-standard software in their work.

145. All Key Stage 4 pupils undertake a basic course in information technology, during which they develop appropriate skills in using software such as desktop publishing and spreadsheet applications. The provision of cross-curricular information technology is starting to develop; some pupils are given opportunities in certain subjects to develop their skills further and to use information technology to enhance their learning. For example, pupils taking the graphics products and food technology courses apply and develop their skills using a range of applications. Pupils use computers to contact pen pals in modern foreign languages. GCSE history and business education pupils often work with databases. However, there is no co-ordinated provision for cross-curricular information technology which, overall, remains weak. Pupils have relatively few opportunities to develop their skills widely across the curriculum. In particular, most pupils, apart from those taking GCSE information technology courses, or those taking the systems and control design and technology course, do not have opportunities to experience the use of information technology for control and measurement. Because they are not taught this element of the National Curriculum, pupils' information technology skills, overall, are below the level expected for their age at the end of Key Stage 4.

146. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and very good in the

sixth form. Teachers generally begin lessons with clear introductions that recap on work already covered and then set out the tasks for the day. They do not spend overlong doing this and allow pupils to get down to working with computers as soon as possible. Pupils enjoy the practical aspects of the work and this is an important factor in promoting good learning, particularly with the lower attaining pupils. Teachers often circulate well, offering constructive feedback and advice by drawing on their good subject knowledge. On occasion, teachers spend too much time with individuals; other pupils who require attention lose concentration and this inhibits progress. However, pupils are confident users of the technology and generally their interest and self motivation keep them well on task. Learning at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 it is good. Teachers use a range of techniques to vary and enrich learning, for example, good quality video material followed by lively and thought provoking questioning. This works well and promotes a good level of interest. Teaching is lively and challenging in the sixth form and the quality of learning in these groups is correspondingly high. The teacher favours a practical, problem solving approach and the good A level results reflect its success.

147. Pupils' attitudes are good. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy lessons. They behave very well in class and keep on task, showing good levels of concentration. They help each other and share expertise effectively.

148. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The taught curriculum in information technology does not now meet statutory requirements fully. There has been no significant improvement in the provision of information technology across the curriculum, although the development of the school's Intranet promises to go some way to remedy this unsatisfactory situation. The co-ordination of cross-curricular activities is weak and, overall, the management of information technology is unsatisfactory. It does not promote an identity for the subject within the school. Monitoring and evaluation of provision are unsatisfactory. There is no scheme of work for information technology across the curriculum to guide and inform other subjects and to help them plan appropriate activities. Many subjects have difficulty in gaining access to information technology resources. Existing computer rooms are in use for over 70 per cent of the time by business studies and information technology courses; other staff find it difficult to book them for times that fit in with their own timetables. The pupil to computer ratio, for reliable computers only, is worse than the national average.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

149. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was just below the national average in French and, for a smaller number of predominantly higher attaining pupils, it was substantially above the national average in German. Results in French show a fall from the previous year, although more candidates were entered. Continuity had been interrupted for a considerable number of pupils during the year by long-term illness of staff. Fewer candidates were entered for German and the results showed a significant increase over the previous year. Girls' achievements in both languages over the past three years have improved year upon year. The trend for boys' achievement follows no pattern, but the results in 1999 for boys in French were well below those of boys nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to G was above the national average in both French and German. All the Year 10 pupils taking early entry for GCSE in French in 1999 gained grades A*, A or B; results were thus much higher than the national average. These pupils are at present preparing for the AS examination in Year 11. Nine pupils from last year's early entry took the AS level examination in a pilot scheme in 1999; six of them secured a pass grade. Their average points score was very close to the

national figure. The two small groups of pupils taking A level in 1999 all gained grades A to E, above the national average.

150. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work in French and German are as expected for pupils' age. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is good, because all teachers use it extensively and consistently. Pupils in a Year 7 German class spoke well in complete sentences but, in general, limited challenge to individual pupils in question and answer sessions restricts the development of pupils' oracy skills. By the end of the key stage, in their written work, higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge of tenses in French and of inversion, the perfect tense and word order in subordinate clauses in German. Generally, however, there is too little writing for purpose, in that sentences from exercises are not used to form short paragraphs of extended writing, although some examples of good extended writing in both languages were seen on display in classrooms. In some cases, there is room for improvement in presentation and for pupils to complete corrections to their written work.

151. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in French is as expected for pupils' ages whilst that in German is well above expected levels. Early entrants in Year 10 and those studying AS level in Year 11 both demonstrate standards above those expected nationally. Year 10 pupils spoke well in role-play situations that they had written themselves; they presented these well to the class, often with humour. Year 11 pupils displayed a good knowledge of a text dealing with the different points of view in England and France regarding British beef and BSE. In German, higher attainers displayed an excellent knowledge of topic vocabulary, matched by a very good knowledge of the perfect tense.

152. Classes in French and German taking A level are small. By Year 13, pupils' attainment is well in line with course expectations. Pupils have a good understanding of the foreign language used exclusively in lessons by teachers, and extract information from cassette successfully. They have acquired a good knowledge of the relevant topic vocabulary to enable them to read authentic texts. Year 13 students demonstrated good progress over time with their French set book in a lesson where they analysed relationships of the different characters in the story.

153. Attitudes to learning were unsatisfactory in only one lesson, where more than half of a small group, mainly boys, were reluctant to work at a listening exercise. In all other lessons attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory and, in many cases, were good or very good. Pupils always work co-operatively in pairs or groups and apply themselves well to their tasks.

154. The quality of teaching overall is good. Teaching, and hence learning, is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Good subject knowledge, and consistent and extensive use of the foreign language to challenge pupils, are strengths of the department, together with the management of pupils and the setting of homework. Teachers know their pupils well and pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily at Key Stage 3 and well at Key Stage 4. Support was well used in two lessons.

155. Lesson objectives are clear, but lesson planning does not always provide an equal balance of linguistic skills, particularly of oral challenge at Key Stage 3. Teaching allows pupils to acquire new knowledge in some lessons, to consolidate what has been learnt in others and to develop a range of linguistic skills. Teachers ensure that pupils are productive; most make pupils think about what they are doing. Good planning and good use of time in a French class of lower attainers in Year 9 enabled pupils to develop oral

skills in pair work and aural skills in a listening exercise with successful results. Higher attainers in a Year 9 German class consolidated their vocabulary and extended it in a role-play situation at a chemist's shop, with appropriate props. A Year 11 German class reflected the enthusiasm of the teacher in an outstanding lesson, when, working in small groups, they produced different versions of a traffic accident in written and spoken form. All the groups presented their versions at the end; this provided the teacher with an assessment of their very good progress. Marking is generally helpful, but it is not yet consistent and regular across the department.

156. Over the past two years the department has had to contend with long-term illness among the staff and the inability to recruit specialist staff. It has proved impossible to recruit a teacher for this half term, and the department has had to work hard to minimise disruption. After half term, a newly qualified teacher (NQT) is due to join the department, in which there are already two NQTs. The head of faculty gives good leadership and management to the department, and he is well supported by the two heads of department. Monitoring and evaluation of performance are satisfactory. The two NQTs have been well supported in their new posts, and the whole department is committed to high achievement. A very good contribution to pupils' cultural development is made by native speakers within the department, by French and German exchanges and by links enabling pupils to benefit from work experience in France and Germany.

157. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good, despite the disruption caused by long-term absence and staff changes. Good teaching is almost at the same level as in the previous report. Early entry in Year 10 for GCSE in French for the more able, followed by AS level for Year 11 pupils, has been introduced. More pupils have expressed an interest in A level courses in French and German for next year than previously. The development of information technology remains an outstanding issue.

MUSIC

158. Standards at age 14, from teacher assessments, are below those expected nationally for pupils of the same age, and below those attained in other subjects. Boys are significantly under performing when compared to girls, with a greater difference than expected nationally. At age 16, the cohort that selects to take music at GCSE varies greatly in both number and levels of attainment. However, the department has consistently achieved a higher percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades than is the norm nationally. The number of pupils entered for GCE A level is too small to make relevant statistical comparison with national averages but, since 1997, all those entered have achieved a grade D or above.

159. The department does not have a formal policy on assessing the level of prior attainment when pupils arrive in Year 7. However, from analysis of pupils' work, and discussions, although levels of prior attainment are variable, overall, they are in line with expectations for pupils of the same age nationally. However, by age 14, attainment, although still with a wide variance, is below that expected. Standards are not as high as they should be. Pupils can perform in groups, both a melody and simple syncopated percussion accompaniment. The most able can add chords to their compositions and perform with confidence and control on their chosen instruments. However, the majority do not interpret mood or effect in performance; most do not develop their ideas beyond a very basic level. Inspection evidence confirms that boys' performance is not as good as that of girls; in addition, higher attainers are not achieving at their optimum or potential level. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and make similar progress to other pupils.

160. Attainment at age 16 is above expectations; pupils in the current Year 10 are attaining significantly above the level expected nationally for their age. In analysis and listening work, pupils recognise geographic sources for music from other cultures and also scale forms and instrumentations. In dictation exercises, they are able to fill in missing rhythms and intervals. They compose in various styles, timbres and textures and use information technology appropriately to refine, modify, score and record their ideas. They perform with confidence and control and, particularly in Year 10, with a developed sense of style and phrasing.

161. At age 18, attainment is in line with course expectations. However, groups are small with a very wide range of attainment. Pupils compose in various styles, for a wide range of instruments. They make widespread use of information technology, but not to the detriment of hand-written scoring and composing. Music technology pupils understand the various terms and techniques and apply them appropriately to recording. Levels of aural awareness and listening abilities are varied; high attainers recognise nuances and similarities and differences in performances, whereas lower attainers analyse only at a very basic level and do not have a widespread and confident use of appropriate vocabulary. Throughout the school, the attainment of the most able pupils musically is well supported by the range of good quality peripatetic teaching and by extra-curricular activities. Opportunities for pupils to participate in, for example, the school's orchestra, a brass group and choirs contribute significantly to their personal development.

162. Teachers have at least sound and, at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, very good subject knowledge. This leads to confident teaching with clear and lively expositions and demonstrations. For example, in a joint Year 12 and 13 lesson, confident explanations, and the skilful use of question and answer, resulted in mutual respect. This allowed very constructive relationships and so pupils felt confident in "having a go" and challenging themselves further. Where teachers make good use of targets, both for learning and behaviour, this results in high expectations and effective challenge, as was observed in a peripatetic guitar lesson. By the end of the lesson, the pupil was performing in an appropriate style and with confidence. Where lessons are planned effectively, there are clear objectives that pupils understand and this leads to good pace and learning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, pupils' understanding, and clear guidelines from the teacher, enabled pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. They were able to persevere and concentrate very well and, with appropriate teacher intervention, modify, refine, and finish their work to a high standard. Effective lessons are drawn to a conclusion with a good review and recap of work covered, as in a Year 7 lesson, where review led to targets for the next lesson.

163. However, at Key Stage 3, some lessons lack formal planning for differentiation and there is a lack of rigour in the use of the available time. Teachers miss opportunities to refine their teaching to meet pupils' needs; thus, as observed in a Year 9 lesson, pupils do not receive optimum challenge nor achieve optimum learning. A feature of many lessons is a late and unstructured start, with an unnecessary amount of time being wasted before learning commences. At Key Stage 3, opportunities to use homework to effectively reinforce and extend learning are not always taken and the quality of marking across the department is inconsistent, with many books not marked by teachers for long periods of time. At this key stage, the required levels of behaviour are not always achieved or maintained, as was observed in a Year 9 lesson where there was low level disturbance throughout. The majority of pupils studying music are at Key Stage 3; most underachieve and do not make satisfactory progress. Hence, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall.

164. Although the day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory, and the instrumental and extra-curricular provisions are well administered, the overall management of the subject is unsatisfactory. There are schemes of work for all key stages and instrumental teaching, but there is no effective planning for continuity and progression across and through the key stages. Information gathered from effective assessment procedures is not used to address curriculum planning or the needs of individual pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3. Groupings within this key stage are not effective in optimising learning and, in some cases, contribute to the differences in attainment between boys and girls. Teaching is not consistent across the department and is not being effectively monitored and evaluated. The management of available curriculum time is not monitored effectively and the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 not being covered in adequate depth.

165. In the last inspection, standards of achievement at GCSE were very high and exceeding the national norms; this is still the case. Information technology skills were weak; they are now good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, but remain weak at Key Stage 3, with few opportunities for pupils to experience the use of information technology for themselves. The quality of pupils' learning was described as high. This is still so at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, but it varies from good to unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, as does the quality of teaching, which was described previously as being of good quality in most cases. A criticism in the last report was the single lesson of 45 minutes at Key Stage 3, which meant there was insufficient time to cover the National Curriculum in the necessary detail; this is still the case. Therefore, the department has maintained the high standards at GCSE, but has made unsatisfactory progress in other areas.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

166. The school does not provide pupils with an opportunity to undertake an examination in GCSE sports studies. The first group of pupils to be entered for A level physical education will sit their examination in 2000.

167. In work seen during the inspection, standards towards the end of Key Stage 3 are above nationally expected levels. Pupils plan work and judge performance effectively. In games, most pupils understand the basic principles of attack and defence and show very sound levels of individual skill. They participate in a health-related exercise programme and have a good knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. Higher attainers use good individual skills in games to consistently out-manoeuvre opponents, while, in dance, their work is characterised by creativity and precision. Lower attaining pupils often achieve beyond expectations, because teachers adapt the work to suit their individual needs.

168. Standards towards the end of Key Stage 4 are above national expectations. Most pupils plan tactics and use well-developed skills to beat opponents. They accurately judge performance. High attainers, in fencing, understand when to attack or defend and their performances show very good levels of anticipation, technique and accuracy. Low attainers, in volleyball, experience difficulties when having to play the serve, due to poor hand-eye co-ordination. In work seen during the inspection, standards towards the end of the sixth form are above the national average. Pupils taking A level have good knowledge of the physiological and psychological factors that affect performance. Their written work is generally well researched and presented, but lacks the enhancement of information technology. Most are achieving above-average levels of practical performance. In trampolining, they plan and link individual skills into fluent sequences. High attainers' work is characterised by height, advanced technique and control. Boys' and girls' attainment is

similar in lessons across all three key stages.

169. The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are planned well; teachers take care to plan activities for pupils of all abilities, with the result that a high proportion of lessons serve the needs of pupils of all attainment levels well. Teachers are supportive, very knowledgeable and manage pupils very well. Their expectations are high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour, the wearing of appropriate kit and safety. As a result, learning is good at Key Stages 3 and 4; it is very good in the sixth form. On entry, pupils consolidate prior learning and quickly learn new skills, basic rules and tactics. They begin to develop knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are challenged to develop their knowledge and understanding of all the games and other activities they undertake. Clear objectives for lessons are shared with pupils, so that they know what they are trying to achieve and how their work can be improved. Opportunities are provided for developing independent learning in a high proportion of lessons. In a sports club, a Year 7 pupil confidently led a strenuous warm-up routine for a group which included sixth formers.

170. In Year 8 rugby, pupils are given opportunities to develop attacking options in small group situations, against opposition. Pupils with special needs are fully integrated into lessons. In Year 9 volleyball, a pupil with special educational needs undertook a specially modified lesson programme. The teacher used simplified skills drills and good support to set achievable targets. In games, rules were adapted to suit pupils' needs. Learning is less effective in the small proportion of lessons where there is too much direction by the teacher and fewer opportunities for pupils to think for themselves. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good at all key stages. They listen to instructions, communicate well in group work and confidently try new skills. Pupils maintain very good relationships with teachers and this creates a good learning environment. Their progress is aided by well-planned and challenging teaching. At Key Stage 4, most pupils consolidate prior learning, develop tactical awareness, refine individual skills and increase their understanding of newly introduced activities. Year 11 pupils undertaking the Sport and Recreation Award are developing a wide range of skills. Most pupils in fencing lessons learn basic techniques quickly and good safety awareness. High attainers show an increased ability to decide correctly when to attack or defend. Lower attaining pupils' progress in games is limited by a lack of tactical and spatial awareness. Sixth form pupils build on previously learnt skills and knowledge. They develop good standards of performance and improve their ability to officiate and coach. A level pupils are developing their research skills and their ability to summarise findings and correct performance. Learning is reinforced by homework that is set and marked regularly.

171. The subject is well led and managed. Assessment procedures are well established across the curriculum; monitoring and evaluation of performance are good. The subject makes a considerable contribution to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils. The provision for extra-curricular sport is very good and a high proportion of pupils (37 per cent) is involved. Individuals and teams in a wide range of sports achieve excellent results at area, county and, occasionally, national levels. Since the last inspection, pupils' good attainment levels and the high quality of teaching have been maintained. The development plan now indicates short and long term priorities. At Key Stage 4, there is still insufficient time (3 per cent) in 'core' physical education to cover the demands of the National Curriculum adequately.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

172. By Year 9, standards are above the expectation for pupils of similar ages as laid down in the locally Agreed Syllabus. Most pupils show clear understanding of spiritual

beliefs and values of the major world religions and their cultural differences. They use appropriate technical vocabulary in their writing, which is often lengthy, imaginative and personal as, for example, in the 'Dreamtime' descriptions in Year 7 of aboriginal spiritual life. Excellent models and artefacts were produced to illustrate graphically Jewish persecution and the plight of Ann Frank in wartime Europe. A small number of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, have literacy difficulties, but good in-class support enables pupils to achieve appropriately and to make satisfactory to good progress over time. Many pupils are developing capable information technology skills and research the department's web site with confidence. Many present their findings using a range of high quality methods.

173. Most pupils, who are following a GCSE course at Key Stage 4, are also attaining above the level expected nationally. Examination results have improved considerably over time, the most recent being significantly above the national average for grades A* to C. Pupils are able to discuss a range of spiritual, moral and ethical issues with good knowledge and oral competence. A Year 11 lesson on Jewish marriage customs and traditions was discussed sensitively and conflicting views were well received. Some good quality coursework was seen on the Shabbatt and some strong opinions were expressed on euthanasia by pupils in Years 10 and 11 respectively. Information technology facilities provided valuable resources for pupils to use for research and for presenting their findings. Non-examination pupils at Key Stage 4 follow a course based on the locally Agreed Syllabus, which provides appropriate opportunities for lively discussion and satisfactory coursework on topics such as Islam.

174. Sixth form standards are also above expectation, with recent A level results being well above the national norm. Some quite scholarly, well-researched essays on a range of themes were seen, while some stimulating discussions took place with pupils developing their coursework to advantage. All other sixth form pupils follow the religious education module of the general studies A level course. This provides opportunities to study religious and philosophical issues, which are generally well received and debated in mature fashion.

175. The quality of teaching is good, often very good and occasionally excellent. Committed teachers have very secure subject knowledge and an enthusiasm which motivates pupils. Careful prior planning of lesson time and the effective use of appropriate resources ensure that pupils are interested and involved throughout, as seen in Year 9, where a well-planned matching exercise enabled pupils to share their ideas on the spiritual concept of God. Appropriately stimulating activities, which provide pupils with different experiences, are used to positive effect; for example, a mock Jewish wedding ceremony, with pupils taking active roles, provided clear insights for pupils into spiritual and cultural values. Lessons are well paced, providing enough time for paired and small group discussion work to take place. Pupils enjoy sharing ideas and do so sensibly. Very positive attitudes are adopted by most; behaviour is normally exemplary. Teachers' high expectations challenge pupils constantly to extend their learning, for example, in the sharing of researched information by Year 12 pupils. Homework is used well to extend the curriculum and to provide pupils with independent learning opportunities; most pupils complete their homework conscientiously. Marking is consistent and thorough, with detailed, supportive comments and areas for improvement identified. Periodic assessments take place, so that pupils are provided with a clear indication of their attainment and progress over time.

176. Management and leadership of the department are good; regular consultative meetings enable realistic future targets to be identified and staff and pupil monitoring arrangements to be organised. During the inspection, the head of department and a

colleague were on maternity leave but the mutual support of the rest of the team ensured that standards were maintained. Since the last inspection, there has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of pupils gaining a GCSE A* to C grade. The A level course, started in 1995, now has successful examination results, which are also well above the national average at the highest grades. The department's web site is already an excellent addition to its resources and is very well used. Visits to local and national religious centres are made when appropriate and a group of staff and pupils are visiting Israel in the very near future.

Business Education

177. GCSE business studies pupils perform well in all components of the examination. Results are above those achieved nationally and, likewise, above those for similar schools. There has been a high degree of consistency in results over the last three years, although 1998 saw a slight decline on previous and subsequent years. The quality of presentation and the depth of analysis seen in coursework reflect the range of higher grades normally achieved. Higher attaining pupils are able to speak with confidence about the nature of their studies, for example, when describing the factors likely to influence the relocation of a company and the implications for the workforce. In preparing their coursework, all pupils make full and competent use of the information technology facilities available to them. The majority of pupils have a sound knowledge of business theory, applying it effectively in written and oral work. Lower attainers are able to describe situations using business terminology, although some have difficulty in explaining the purpose of aspects of the coursework. Year 10 pupils showed a good understanding of the concept of marketing and were able to apply their knowledge with accuracy. Pupils with special educational needs performed well in lessons, because teachers have a good understanding of their needs and provide effective support. These pupils achieve well, with work being differentiated by task and teacher intervention. Equally, teachers are aware of the needs of higher attainers, providing extension work to challenge pupils appropriately.

178. Post-16 pupils achieve above average results in A level business studies examinations. Although the sixth form provision is relatively recent, results for the last three years have been consistently ahead of national averages. Results in economics have not been at the same level, but have matched those achieved by other pupils nationally. Subject knowledge is developed well in business studies, with pupils' understanding being evident through the confident way in which they engage the teacher and their peers in discussion. Pupils have a good grasp of theory and apply it effectively with reference to the main authorities in the field. For example, the group looking at motivational theory showed a clear knowledge and understanding of the work of Taylor and Mayo. Standards in the post-16 vocational programmes are good, with completion rates above average, although the number of pupils involved is low. Those taking advanced business GNVQ have achieved distinction and merit grades. However, the level of work seen in the GNVQ programme is not at the same level as that of the A level group.

179. Teaching is good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. Learning was good in those lessons where the right balance was struck between teacher direction and student activity. Where the teaching is good, a variety of methods is used, which creates an appropriate pace, encouraging well-motivated pupils to maintain concentration throughout lessons. In the more effective lessons, questioning was used to develop pupils' thinking and to assess the quality of their learning. Where learning was less secure, lessons were not structured well; too little attention was given to review either during or at the end of sessions. There was over-direction by the teacher, thereby restricting opportunities for pupils to take more control of their learning.

180. The department has the benefit of an efficient and effective head of faculty, who also has some responsibility for information technology. His good understanding of the subject, supported by competent experienced staff, creates an effective team. Good use is made of all data available related to pupil performance; it is analysed thoroughly, used in target setting and informs planning within the department. The department gains from being linked with information technology and the access to equipment that results.

Vocational Education

181. The school offers vocational programmes to post-16 pupils in art and design, business, leisure and tourism and health and social care. Although numbers of pupils taking these courses are small, results have been consistently good. Completion rates, when compared to national figures, are above those expected, with a higher than average number of merit and distinction awards. The quality of portfolios for pupils taking advanced level courses is broadly in line with that expected for A level work. Key skills development is integrated well, with information technology skills being particularly good. Year 13 pupils taking leisure and tourism prepared and presented a study of a local travel company, having gathered information from an Internet site. The whole presentation was made very effectively, using 'power point'. GNVQ teachers have a sound understanding of the assessment process and are supported well by a competent co-ordinator, who provides in-service training as required. Reports from the external verifier confirm the quality of pupils' portfolios, together with the accuracy of recording and assessment within the centre. With the exception of art and design, all vocational areas have been operating since the sixth form began, although numbers recruited to the courses have remained small. Intermediate level courses are offered, but rarely run with adequate numbers. Currently there is only one pupil taking an intermediate course, making any form of group activity impossible.

182. Whilst the co-ordination of GNVQ is sound, the small size of groups and budgetary and timetabling restrictions require groups to be combined. For example, in health and social care, pupils in Year 12 and Year 13 are together for taught sessions, along with one intermediate pupil. Art and design pupils are taught with those taking A level. These arrangements make teaching the appropriate level of theory difficult. The relatively low numbers taking vocational courses have so far enabled successful outcomes. However, should the vocational provision increase, current timetabling arrangements are likely to prove unworkable. There is currently no GNVQ base room for pupils.