

INSPECTION REPORT

SIR JOHN LEMAN HIGH SCHOOL

Beccles, Suffolk

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124817

Headteacher: Mr Nigel English

Reporting inspector: Terry Cook
2398

Dates of inspection: 13th March 2000 – 17th March 2000

Inspection number: 185529

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: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 13 – 18 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
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| Appropriate authority: | Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Dr John Kelly |
| Local Education Authority: | Suffolk |
| Date of previous inspection: | 2 nd – 6 th October 1995 |

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| Team members | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| Terry Cook | Registered inspector | | What sort of school is it? How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well is the school led and managed? |
| Sheila Long | Lay inspector | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| Mel Croft | Team inspector | | How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? |
| Melinda Derry | Team inspector | English | |
| Colin Penfold | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| John Spradbery | Team inspector | Key Stage 4 | How well does the school care for its pupils? |
| Paul Mitchell | Team inspector | Science Sixth Form | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| Maggie Holling | Team inspector | History | |
| Harmer Parr | Team inspector | Modern Foreign Languages | |
| Godfrey Bancroft | Team inspector | Physical Education | |
| Felicity Golding | Team inspector | Geography Religious Education | |
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| David Sheppard | Team inspector | Special Educational Needs English As An Additional Language Art Music | |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sir John Leman School is a coeducational 13-19 comprehensive school with 1,360 pupils on roll. There are 325 students in the sixth form. Pupils' attainment on entry is close to national averages. One hundred and fifty four pupils are eligible for free school meals which is close to the national average. Only 13 pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which is very low, and two pupils have English as an additional language. One hundred and forty pupils have special educational needs and 47 have statements which is above the national average. The school has an study centre catering for 34 pupils with varying special needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sir John Leman School is a good school. Standards overall are above the national average for Key Stage 3 tests and in General Certification of Secondary Education (GCSE) results. Standards at A level are slightly below the national average. The school is very well led and displays the ability to sustain future improvement. Strengths greatly outweigh weaknesses and with greater coherence and continuity in teaching, the implementation of school policies and more effective delegation, there is the potential to see further development and rising standards. The positive attitudes of pupils and students and the high proportion of good and very good teaching provides the school with the platform from which to achieve further success. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Key Stage 3 test results for science are well above average.
- Key Stage 4 overall standards and achievements at Key Stage 4 are good, with GCSE results well above the national average and average for similar schools.
- Pupils' attitudes are good and in particular the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is a strength of the school.
- The vast majority of pupils and students behave well.
- The high proportion of good and very good teaching contributes to high standards in the school.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work in some subjects is particularly effective.
- Pupils with special educational needs and in the study centre are given good support.
- Pupils' social and cultural development through curricular and extra-curricular activities is good.
- Communications with parents are good.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher who has a clear vision for the future.
- The 'Achievement for All' programme has been successful in raising standards.
- The school has many good links with its contributory schools.
- The school has very effective systems for monitoring pupils' provision in all subjects.
- The reading recovery programme is a strength in reading development.
- Good support is provided for University students as part of their initial teacher training.
- An effective house system ensures a high level of pupil support and care by tutors.

What could be improved

- Greater consistency in the quality of teaching.
- Greater coherence and consistency in the implementation of school policies.
- More effective delegation within the school and ensuring that issues are addressed at the appropriate level of responsibility.
- Writing a definitive set of school aims that are implemented effectively.
- Clarifying the information required by governors and ensuring that this is available.
- Ensuring governors meet their statutory and health and safety requirements in full.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last OFSTED inspection. Previously, teaching was good or better in five out of ten lessons and almost two out of ten were unsatisfactory. Now teaching is good overall, with six out of ten lessons good or better and only one in ten unsatisfactory. In 1995, boys achieved less well than girls at GCSE. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the attainment of both boys and girls was well above average. Standards in aspects of design and technology and in art have improved. Progress has been made in German but this has not yet been reflected in examination results, which remain well below average. The quality of pupils' reports have improved but inconsistencies still remain. Accommodation remains an issue but much of the solution remains beyond the control of the school. Health and safety issues identified in 1995 have been overcome but new ones have emerged. The school still fails to meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with | | | | Key |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|---|
| | all schools | | | similar schools | |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 | |
| Key Stage 3 Tests | B | C | B | C | well above average A average above average B average C below average D well below average E |
| GCSE examinations | A | A | A | A | |
| A-levels/AS-levels | C | D | C | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

At the end of Key Stage 3 tests, results were close to the national average in English and above the national average in mathematics and science. Over the longer period, 1996 to 1999, results were just below the national average in English, above the average in mathematics, and well above the average in science. In the other subjects in Key Stage 3, attainment is at least in line with national expectations. At Key Stage 3 overall attainment is satisfactory and achievement is good.

In GCSE examinations in 1999, results were well above average. There has been an upward trend in the proportion of the year group gaining higher GCSE grades. In 1999, above average results were achieved in most subjects at GCSE grades A* to C. Average results were achieved in French. Results in drama and German were below average. Standards in physical education match national expectations. Current overall standards and achievement are good. Standards at A level are slightly below the national average, with fewer pupils achieving grades A or B than nationally. Students' progress on A level courses is at least satisfactory. The majority of students completing the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses achieve awards at advanced or intermediate level. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils write at length in many areas of the curriculum and students in the sixth form use writing well to develop and support their thinking. Standards of reading are satisfactory. At all key stages numeracy skills are in line with national expectations. Pupils' skills in information technology are above national

expectations at Key Stage 3 and meet national expectations at Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Good; attitudes are good overall. The vast majority of pupils like their school and work hard. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good; pupils and students generally behave well. Only a very small minority of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 misbehave. |
| Personal development and relationships | Good; the quality of the relationships between teachers and pupils is a strength of the school. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory; attendance matches the national average. Unauthorised absence is slightly below average and authorised slightly above. |

Pupils generally are keen to attend lessons and take an interest in and enjoy their work. Many pupils work independently and cooperatively. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy their work, participate well in lessons and take a full part in school life. During lessons most pupils are committed to learning, responsive to their teachers and contribute to an orderly environment within the school. Only a very small minority of pupils misbehave. Most pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 do the work expected of them, although some do not catch up work they miss through absence. Many pupils are self-motivated. Response to the high expectations of staff and to the school's commendation system is generally good throughout the school. Most pupils are willing to take on responsibility when presented with the opportunity. As at the time of the last inspection, some lateness to lessons occurs.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged 13-14 years | aged 14-16 years | aged over 16 years |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Good | Good | 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 quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is good or better in six out of every ten lessons. Good or very good teaching occurs in most subjects. However, in Key Stages 3 and 4, one in every ten lessons is unsatisfactory. This weaker teaching occurs mainly in English, mathematics, art, design and technology and modern foreign languages. Mostly, pupils respond to the good teaching in the school by showing above average interest, concentration and independence. As a result, the quality of learning and progress is good overall at Key Stages 3 and 4. However, in some weaker lessons, teachers do not match the work well to the needs of the class, or do not demand sufficiently high standards of behaviour. In the sixth form, GNVQ students take a great deal of responsibility for their own learning but this is less evident in some A level subjects. Although the quality of learning in the lessons seen was satisfactory and sometimes good, greater participation would enhance the progress made by students overall. Teaching in the study centre is good and pupils make good progress. In a few lessons, where subject teachers lack the experience to structure work closely to individual needs, the teaching of special educational needs pupils is unsatisfactory. Planning for the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the school is insufficiently developed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Mainly broad and balanced, with aspects of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form requiring additional breadth. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good; pupils are given good support. Provision in the study centre is good. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Satisfactory; pupils integrate with their peers and progress well. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Satisfactory; satisfactory for spiritual and moral; good for social and cultural with particular strengths in both these areas of development through curricular and extra-curricular activities. The personal, social and health education programme contains the required elements, apart from in Year 10 where it is unsatisfactory. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Satisfactory; the school is an orderly community in which pupils' academic performance is closely monitored and social needs are catered for well. Health and safety issues require attention. |

A range of extra-curricular activities enhances the broad and balanced curriculum. However, participation in some of these extra-curricular activities has been disappointing. Pupils at Key Stage 4 do not receive their full National Curriculum entitlement for information technology. The school fails to meet the statutory requirements to provide religious education in the sixth form. Although pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is addressed in some schemes of work, there are insufficient explicit references to develop these further. At Key Stage 3 and 4, 'houses' operate as small family units and play an important and effective role in the school. Sixth form tutors are committed to the students in their care. Formal communication between teachers about individual pupils is good. The school has very effective systems for monitoring pupils' progress and makes good use of assessment data to construct termly short reports. Communications with parents are good and the school is keen to develop and expand the successful parent partnership group.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher's leadership and management has been key to raising standards and school improvement. Other managers have been mostly effective in raising standards and some faculties and houses are well run and organised. This is not uniform and practice is inconsistent. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The governing body is hard-working but governors are not always proactive in their requirements for information about developments in the school. The chair of governors is clear about the direction of the school and of its strengths and weaknesses. Some statutory requirements are not fully met. |
| The school's | The school makes good use of monitoring data and has a potentially |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| evaluation of its performance | effective system of monitoring and evaluating teaching. In both of these areas there is inconsistency in practice. |
| The strategic use of resources | There is a strong link between the development of educational priorities and spending. |

The school has been particularly successful in fulfilling its motto 'Achievement for All' and it has had a measurable impact on achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4. The school is very well led and managed by the new headteacher who works closely with the governors. Although there are very good examples of leadership and management at all levels within the school, this is not uniform and results in inconsistent practice and issues not always being addressed at the appropriate level of responsibility. The school development plan is well constructed but supporting documentation contains various versions of the school aims and this does not support consistency in planning.

The school is in a healthy state financially and governors are active in their monitoring of spending against budget plans. However, governors are not sufficiently involved in determining how the school uses its money. Staffing is adequate for both teaching and administrative staff. Routine organisation and administration are good. Generally, there is a good match between staff qualifications, expertise and subjects they teach. The school has adequate accommodation to meet curriculum needs. On the other hand, corridors are narrow, and overcrowded, pupils have no social areas and sixth form private study space is limited. Despite some of the poor conditions, pupils are mainly responsible and respectful of their school. However, the accommodation has an adverse effect on a significant minority of pupils who take advantage of the situation to misbehave. Despite the problems with the buildings in terms of suitability and size, the school could do more to improve their appearance.

The school has a satisfactory level of resources, and expenditure has been increased to provide a satisfactory range of computer equipment. The school seeks to get 'best value' on major items of expenditure, including buildings maintenance, but it does not operate a formal 'best value' policy.

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 school lives up to its motto of 'Achievement for All'. • Communications with parents are good. • Pupils make good progress. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • The school is well led and managed. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • Pupils and students become mature and responsible individuals. • The teaching is good. • The pupils and students like the school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline is lax and inappropriate behaviour adversely affects learning. • There is variation in the quality and the amount of work pupils have to do at home. • There is inconsistency in teachers' expectations for the lower-middle ability sets. • The school does not work closely with parents. • Parents are not well informed about how their children are progressing. • Behaviour of some pupils is adversely affected by overcrowded buildings. |

Inspection findings agree with the positive views parents and carers have of 'what pleases them most'. Concerns expressed by a significant minority of parents relating to inconsistency surrounding homework were confirmed during the inspection. Inspection evidence does not support some parents' views that lax discipline and adversely affects the

learning of others. However, the inappropriate behaviour of a small number does have a slight adverse effect on the progress of others. Where instances of poor behaviour occur, particularly at Key Stage 4, these are linked to unsatisfactory teaching and not, in the main, to disaffected pupils. There is evidence that there is inconsistency in teacher expectation of pupils in lower and middle sets, especially within English and mathematics. Some parents feel that the school does not work closely with them but this was outweighed by those parents who are positive about this. Inspectors agree that further improvement could take place to address parental concern about the quality of both short and full school reports. Accommodation remains an issue for the school. Although some of the solutions are beyond its means, there are improvements that could be made to drab and uninspiring areas of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS

The school's results and achievements.

1. Pupils take the national tests at Key Stage 3 in Year 9 after attending the school for less than one year. In 1999, results in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, were overall above the national average compared with all schools and close to the average for similar schools. When the 1999 results based on average point scores are broken down into individual subjects, they were close to the national average in English and above the national average in mathematics and science. The best results at higher levels were achieved in science (level 6 or above) which were well above average, compared with close to the national average for English and mathematics. When compared with similar schools, attainment in English was below average, in mathematics it was close to average and in science it was well above average. Over a longer period, taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, results were just below the national average in English, above the national average in mathematics and well above the national average in science. Over this four year period, there was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in mathematics and science when compared to national averages. During this period, boys performed less well in English than in the other subjects so that the difference in performance between boys and girls was greater than that found nationally. In 1999, the attainment of boys in English improved, bringing it closer to the national average.
2. During the inspection, standards in the work seen in Key Stage 3 matched national expectations in English and mathematics and were above expectations in science. In other subjects in Key Stage 3, standards are above national expectations in design and technology and history, and match national expectations in art, geography, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Standards in religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Across all subjects at Key Stage 3, overall standards are satisfactory and achievement is good.
3. In GCSE examinations in 1999, the average total GCSE points score per pupil (Grade A*=8 points, A=7, B=6.....G=1) was well above the national average and average for similar schools. There has also been an upward trend in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C since the last inspection. In 1999, the school's results included 61.2 per cent at grades A* to C, 14.9 per cent higher than the national average. At the last inspection they were only 5.8 per cent higher. There has also been an upward trend in the GCSE points score per pupil since the last inspection. The previous inspection identified the lower performance of boys at GCSE as an issue that needed to be addressed. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the attainment of both boys and girls was well above average overall.
4. In 1999, above average results were achieved at GCSE grades A* to C in English language and literature, mathematics, science, art and design, business studies, design and technology, history, music, geography and religious education. Average results were achieved in French. Results in drama and German were below average. A similar pattern of attainment to the GCSE results was seen in subjects in Key Stage 4 during the inspection. Standards in physical education match national expectations. Current overall standards and achievement across the school are good.
5. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall and achieve

examination success, particularly where they are directly supported by specialist special educational needs staff. Where no specialist support is available, most pupils with special educational needs still make satisfactory progress, but in a few lessons, where work is not sufficiently adjusted to meet their needs, progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils in the study centre make good progress and are very well supported. Two pupils do not have English as a first language. Both pupils are taught in mainstream classes, cope well with the work and make satisfactory progress.

6. The school did very well against the 1999 targets set for GCSE. There was steady improvement in English and mathematics and strong improvement in science. The GCSE targets set for the year 2000, established some time ago, now look modest as the school has already exceeded the target of 60 per cent for A* to C grades.
7. Standards at A level are slightly below the national average but above the average for the Suffolk Local Education Authority. Fewer pupils achieve grades A or B at A level than the national average. Comparisons with similar schools nationally are not made. The school has an entry requirement for A level of five higher GCSE grades. In practice, some students start A levels with lower grades. The range of achievements of the present Year 13 matched that in the 1999 examinations. Students make progress on A level courses that is at least satisfactory.
8. In 1999 the majority of students completing the GNVQ course in Business and Health and Social Care achieved awards at advanced or intermediate level. Most GNVQ students currently taking the courses achieve results that are achieving course expectations and some are above average.
9. Pupils at both key stages demonstrate satisfactory speaking and listening skills. They have particular strengths in their willingness to listen to the ideas and arguments of their peers, for example, when working in the study centre or on the Reading Recovery programme. Weaknesses still persist, however, in the standards of speaking and listening in modern foreign languages, where work is insufficiently focused on developing these skills. In the sixth form, standards of speaking and listening are good overall, with pupils able to make informed comments and judgements, to cite evidence in support of arguments and to listen attentively to their peers and to their teachers. However, a significant proportion of pupils do not contribute orally in class discussions. Pupils respond well to tasks that ask them to write at length in many areas of the curriculum. Pupils working with study centre support in particular make good progress. In subjects such as English, history and design and technology, teachers are imaginative in finding ways to develop and consolidate new vocabulary and, as a result, pupils use new language with confidence in writing. In other subject areas, practice is not always consistently well developed, and pupils' writing is weaker as a result. In the sixth form, the majority of students use writing well to develop and support their thinking and write substantial essays that are of good quality in a range of subjects. Standards of reading across all subject areas are satisfactory. Pupils on the Reading Recovery programme are positive in their attitudes to reading, well informed about strategies to promote successful reading, knowledgeable about a range of books and confident in discussing these issues.
10. During the inspection, numeracy skills were used in a number of subjects. For example, pupils were able to read and interpret tables, charts and graphs in history, design and technology, science and modern foreign languages. Pupils were applying accurately formulae in electronics to calculate values of resistance, and most Key Stage 4 pupils in design and technology have conducted elementary research by designing surveys involving small samples. In science, higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 were able to plot data accurately using line graphs, but could also

interpret these graphs, giving justifiable reasons for changes in gradient. These are above average numeracy skills. Lower-attaining pupils have difficulty remembering multiplication facts, and their skills of mental calculation are relatively undeveloped. Students who are studying physics or chemistry, but not mathematics at A level, follow mathematics for science courses, planned and taught by members of the science department. This is good practice and has a positive impact on the attainment of the students, but there is no coordination with the mathematics department. At all key stages, numeracy skills match national expectations.

11. Pupils' skills in information technology are above national expectations at Key Stage 3 and meet national expectations at Key Stage 4. There are insufficient opportunities in subjects across the curriculum for pupils to use and further develop their information technology skills. Access to computers at home by many pupils helps them to practise and extend their skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes are good overall. In seven out of ten lessons they are good or better and in only six per cent of lessons are they unsatisfactory. In the sixth form attitudes are never less than satisfactory. There are examples of excellent attitudes towards all aspects of school life. The vast majority of pupils like their school and work hard, and the majority of parents support this view. This situation is much improved on the last inspection when in 14 per cent of lessons, attitudes were less than satisfactory.
13. Pupils generally are keen to attend lessons and take an interest in and enjoy their work, for example, in design and technology, physical education, mathematics and history. Many pupils work independently and cooperatively. For the most part they settle quickly to tasks, are attentive and respond positively to well directed questioning by teachers and in class discussion, for example, in economics, science and design and technology. However, on occasions some pupils have too much to say for themselves and interrupt the flow of teachers' explanations by talking together, for example, in Key Stage 4 science and Year 11 design and technology, or they have a poor attitude towards the subject, for example, some Key Stage 3 and 4 boys in German.
14. Key Stage 3 pupils respond very well to lessons when their tasks are interesting and challenging, for example, in physical education, but when tasks are not intrinsically motivating, or their purpose and relevance is not clear, pupils on the whole still respond conscientiously, but their rate of work is slow and some lose attention and focus. The pupils are motivated well in Key Stage 4 by the lively, structured and relevant teaching. However, when teaching is not interesting pupils disengage from lessons, and can become boisterous and distract others, for example, in mathematics, or they become passive and do not take part actively in lessons. Students in the sixth form work hard in lessons, often continue discussions beyond the end of the lesson and make notes conscientiously. They do the work expected of them, particularly in English and modern foreign languages.
15. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy their work, participate well in lessons, are accepted by their classmates and take full part in school life. When they are given support by specialist special educational needs staff they take pride in their work and apply themselves to extended tasks. Within the study centre, pupils respond positively to the atmosphere created by staff by generally behaving in a calm, purposeful and confident manner. They relate well to one another and enjoy friendly relationships with staff. They generally maintain concentration and interest, often working at an independent level.

16. Pupils and students generally behave well. During lessons, most pupils are committed to learning, responsive to their teachers and create an orderly environment within the school, for example, in history. Only a very small minority of pupils misbehave. Inspection evidence does not support some parents' views that lax discipline adversely affects the learning of others. However, the inappropriate behaviour of a small number of pupils does have a slight adverse effect on the progress of others. Where instances of poor behaviour occur, particularly at Key Stage 4, these are linked to unsatisfactory teaching and not in the main to disaffected pupils. Pupils excluded from lessons are not always expected to continue with work and, for Year 11 pupils in the crucial build-up period to external examinations, this hinders progress.
17. The great majority of pupils form constructive relationships with one another, teachers and adults in lessons. The quality of the relationships between teachers and pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils support each other, for example, in information technology, work well alongside each other and in practical lessons look after one another's safety, for example, in design and technology. There is no evidence that pupils work in an oppressive atmosphere, instances of bullying were not seen or reported, and any pupil misbehaviour is dealt with sensitively, firmly and effectively. Exclusions have been rising in the past year but the new headteacher has stabilised this situation and they remain very low, in the bottom five per cent in relation to national figures. The number of permanent exclusions has remained static, at two. This is very low in national terms.
18. There are no social areas within the school buildings for the pupils to meet at break and lunchtimes. The vast majority of pupils are very tolerant and make the most of corridor areas and open spaces to meet in relaxed and orderly social gatherings. There is very little evidence of graffiti or vandalism and this is in line with the generally positive ethos in and around the school. However, a significant minority do exploit the situation, go against the school aims and ethos and are boisterous in behaviour; congregate in out of bounds areas, for example, the car parks; drop litter and cans in corridor and playground areas and smoke both in the toilet areas and around the school site.
19. Most pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 do the work expected of them, although some do not catch up work missed through absence. At all key stages, once given instructions, pupils engage with practical work with little need for further instructions from the teacher, for example, in science and design and technology. In sixth form lessons, some students tend to be passive recipients of information and to respond to questions rather than to engage actively with the lesson. However, there are instances when this is not the case, for example, in design and technology students display interest and are keen to discuss their general success. In GNVQ lessons there is a high level of self-motivation. Pupils work with sustained concentration and fulfil well the extensive course requirements. Good involvement was seen in an A level physics lesson where students working on assignments had done some research for themselves and discussed and debated the design and results of their investigations with their teacher.
20. Response to the high expectations of staff and to the school's commendation system is generally good. When teachers provide good examples as role models the pupils are respectful and polite, for example, in history. A number of pupils are positive about the School Council and participate in its activities but others lack enthusiasm.
21. In assemblies and some lessons, pupils reflect on what they do and its impact on others, for example, in geography and religious education, but teachers in most lessons do not systematically plan for this and many opportunities for reflection are

lost. However, pupils are supportive of one another and do consider and respect different opinions and beliefs. Most pupils show responsibility and are willing to take on responsibility when presented with the opportunity, for example, sixth form students and their fund raising for a Kenyan school; pupils supporting the work of the library and participating in and supporting the Reading Recovery programme; and Key Stage 3 pupils in design and technology when undertaking research and working in the computer room. The great majority are good at meeting deadlines and take responsibility for equipment they use. However, in Year 11, a minority of pupils are still too reliant on the teacher, do not clear away practical equipment or complete coursework without constant reminders.

22. The school has in place good systems to evaluate and promote attendance. Attendance rates are close to national averages. The school does recognise that attendance rates could be higher and also the adverse effects of absence on the continuity of learning. As at the time of the last inspection some lateness to lessons occurs. This is due to the large school site and difficulty of movement within overcrowded corridors. Corridors are cramped and overcrowded but pupils are well behaved, move in an orderly fashion and display respect for one another, teachers and visitors alike.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching was good or better in six out of every ten lessons. Good or very good teaching occurs in most subjects, but especially in science, design and technology, history, geography, physical education and music. However, across Key Stages 3 and 4, one in every ten lessons is unsatisfactory. This weaker teaching occurs mainly in mathematics, art, design and technology and modern foreign languages, and in a few English lessons. The position is an improvement on the previous inspection where five out of every ten lessons were good or better and almost two out of every ten were unsatisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in the sixth form.
24. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They give clear accurate explanations, and they use questioning well to test understanding, to encourage pupils to think, to involve pupils in class discussions and to consolidate learning. Most teachers have high expectations of attainment particularly in the higher sets, for example, in mathematics.
25. In most lessons, teachers' planning is effective. Teachers clearly identify what pupils are intended to learn in the lesson and share this with the class. Where the learning objectives are made clear to the pupils at the beginning of a lesson, for example, in science, geography and history, then pupils understand what they are doing, try hard to apply themselves to the tasks set and work at a good pace. There is some weak teaching in some lower set mathematics groups and design and technology. In these lessons, pupils' learning is limited either because of an inappropriate choice of activity that does not develop pupils' understanding or because the activity is insufficiently challenging.
26. Overall the teachers' relationships with their pupils are good. Mostly, pupils respond to the good teaching in the school by showing above average interest, concentration and independence. As a result, the quality of learning and progress is good overall at Key Stages 3 and 4. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons. However, in some weaker lessons where teachers do not match the work well to the needs of the class, for example, in modern foreign languages, or teachers do not demand sufficiently high standards of behaviour, for example, in some English lessons, then the attitudes of some pupils to learning are

unsatisfactory.

27. In the sixth form, GNVQ students take a great deal of responsibility for their own learning, but this is less evident in some A level subjects where students contribute only when asked questions. Teachers do not always encourage students to be more actively involved in lessons or impress upon them the need to extend their studies by further reading and research outside the lessons. Although the quality of learning in the lessons seen was satisfactory and sometimes good, greater participation would enhance the progress made by students overall.
28. In some subjects, for example, drama, music and science, teaching is very effective in encouraging pupils' creative effort. On the other hand, in modern foreign languages where teaching is weaker, pupils have insufficient opportunity to apply their skills or creativity. In aspects of design and technology and physical education, teaching develops pupils' physical skills well.
29. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of their learning. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work in English, drama and design and technology is particularly effective in ensuring that pupils know what they need to do to improve. In other subjects, for example, in science, mathematics and information technology, although pupils' work is marked, it does not always tell them what they need to do to become better. Homework is set but not always with the frequency planned in all subjects. Pupils' homework diaries too often indicate that homework has not been set. Where it is set, it is often effective, for example, in science, English and modern foreign languages where it builds on the work that pupils undertake during lessons.
30. Teaching in the study centre is good. It is based on the confident and relaxed management of well planned lessons which use question and answer techniques to advantage. Additional support is focused through the careful use of support assistants. Pupils in the great majority of lessons respond well to this, behaving appropriately and sustaining interest and concentration. Pupils in the study centre make good progress.
31. Outside the study centre when pupils with special educational needs are taught by specialist special educational needs staff, the teaching is of a consistently high standard. These staff have a very full knowledge of the needs of individual pupils, and construct learning activities with careful thought to enable special educational needs pupils to make progress. Special educational needs staff have a well developed understanding of a broad range of teaching approaches and work flexibly, trying different approaches to help pupils learn. In other lessons, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs does not always support their learning. Where the teachers' planning is good, and takes proper account of different ability levels, special educational needs pupils are taught well. In a few lessons, where subject teachers lack the experience to structure work closely to individual needs, the teaching of special educational needs pupils is unsatisfactory.
32. Provision for reading, particularly for personal reading and for extended reading to support learning in subjects is very variable across the school. Some pupils in both key stages and in the sixth form do not always make appropriate progress. The range of personal reading of some pupils is too narrow and although the library provides a good range of books, thoughtfully selected and well displayed in an attractive environment, its use as a resource for independent study is not

consistently exploited by departments. As a result, all pupils do not develop the repertoire of research skills that they need to handle the demands of the secondary school curriculum. In particular, they do not develop specific library skills, and some pupils are unclear about systems of classification and organisation in the library.

33. Where good opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in activities such as structured discussion, pupils at both key stages demonstrate satisfactory speaking and listening. Pupils respond well to tasks that ask them to write at length in many areas of the curriculum. In history, pupils at Key Stage 3 handled successfully the conventions of writing historical analysis in which they embedded their recreations of 'original' documents, including imaginary letters home from the trenches in the First World War. In design and technology, pupils construct formally written design briefs and evaluations and, in both these subject areas, the impact of the whole-school policy on teaching subject specific vocabulary is in evidence both in pupils' writing and in the contributions they make orally to lessons. Library monitors are well informed and well trained in library systems, and this expertise needs to be shared more widely. Teaching in modern foreign languages is insufficiently focused on the development of the explicit skills in speaking and in listening.
34. There is no planned provision for coordinating or teaching of numeracy across the curriculum, apart from in the sixth form for students studying chemistry and physics but not mathematics. Consequently, there is no coordinated approach to raising standards of numeracy across the curriculum. Although there is no whole-school co-ordinator for numeracy, there is a numeracy coordinator for GNVQ courses, but there is no specific involvement of the mathematics department in this area.

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

35. The school provides the full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education for all pupils of statutory school age. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when the provision for religious education did not meet statutory requirements. However, the provision for information technology across all subjects at Key Stage 4 is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met. The school also fails to meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education for students in the sixth form.
36. Almost all subject departments have appropriate schemes of work and where these are very detailed, for example, in science and religious education, they provide excellent support for teaching. Although aspects of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are present in some schemes of work, there are insufficient explicit references to the development of these.
37. The schemes of work for GNVQ courses are thorough, with reference to timelines for each unit, teachers' guidance on the students' collection of evidence and by the identification of specific teaching points. The department has successfully overcome the issues identified in the previous inspection.
38. The curriculum at all key stages provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities for pupils. A range of extra-curricular activities enhances this, although take up of some of these by pupils has been disappointing, apart from areas such as sport, drama and music. Inspectors support parental views that the school could do more 'selling of activities' to pupils. School visits and exchanges are well organised and these are usually well supported.
39. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support through the provision in Key Stage 4 of 'open option' and 'Individual Education Plan' sessions. These

arrangements enable special educational needs staff to provide direct support for work which pupils are undertaking in their other subjects. The focus on individual pupils, and the strong partnership between teachers and learning support assistants, enhances the self-esteem and confidence of special educational needs pupils.

40. The sixth form offers a good range of subjects, which includes A level subjects and GNVQ courses. The range of subjects has been increased since the last inspection which has had a beneficial effect by widening choice for students. In addition to their examination studies, sixth form students are able to broaden their curriculum through a well planned general studies programme and by participating in voluntary activities, such as helping at the Beccles Volunteer Centre or helping younger pupils improve their reading.
41. The school motto is 'Achievement for All' and the school is successful in enabling all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make at least satisfactory progress. The school has yet to identify clear strategies to promote the learning of those pupils who are gifted and talented.
42. Appropriate action has been taken to address the underachievement of boys, identified as an issue in the previous inspection. These actions have also resulted in fewer behaviour problems and improved GCSE performance.
43. The provision for the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory. These pupils make good progress and they integrate well with their peer groups.
44. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme contains the required elements, but is fragmented. Different staff have responsibility for different aspects of the programme, and the area as a whole is not well coordinated. PSHE is taught through the general studies programme. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are good, and in Years 9 and 11 the teaching is sometimes lively and stimulating, but in other cases draws a poor response from pupils. Provision for Year 10, where pupils are withdrawn from tutorial time in two four-week blocks, is unsatisfactory due to the insufficient time available to cover the required work. Drugs education is a particular strength, with good involvement of outside speakers. A working party of staff from the school and its contributory schools is currently considering how the new element of citizenship can be tackled. When this group reports in May, the whole PSHE programme should be reviewed.
45. The school enables good social and cultural development and satisfactory spiritual and moral development for its pupils. The school promotes a policy of self-discipline and of developing tolerance and responsibility for 'ourselves and others' with opportunity for 'Achievement for All'. It is evident from the sensible and mature way most pupils and students conduct themselves that the vast majority who work in or attend the school contribute to this ethos.
46. The quality of provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. In some areas of the curriculum, such as physical education, music, drama and design technology, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own personal achievements. Some pupils are recognised and congratulated by others for their individual achievements such as awards for high performance in music. In other subjects, such as geography, pupils enhance their spiritual development through their response to the plight of others, for example, the homeless in Brazil. In English, the seriousness with which reading is taught establishes an atmosphere in which sensitive issues of personal development can be explored with both sensitivity and depth. Religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual

awareness. Here, pupils are given the opportunity to consider deep, universal questions, such as the existence of God. They respond well and show maturity in their answers. However, some curriculum opportunities are missed or are not considered. There is no specific policy or shared understanding in the school of the spiritual dimension of the curriculum. The school has not traced, through its curriculum planning, opportunities for spiritual development.

47. The quality of the assemblies during the inspection was often good and made a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. They covered topics such as trust, love, thankfulness as well as social issues. However, the extent of the pupils' opportunity to participate actively in these occasions was limited and the assemblies did not take place every day. These assemblies did not always constitute an act of collective worship and therefore the school continues not to meet the statutory requirements in this area.
48. The quality of moral education is satisfactory. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school. A lot of trust is placed in the pupils and they generally respond in a mature way. The privilege of access to the accommodation and computers at lunchtimes is not abused. Moral issues are addressed in a number of curriculum areas such as physical education, modern foreign languages in the sixth form, science, geography and religious education. Charities are well supported, and fund-raising events are popular and well organised. This is demonstrated by the enthusiasm with which events are organised to support disabled pupils at a school in Kenya. Issues concerning the ethics of nuclear power and the morality of war are addressed and in the sixth form the general studies programme includes moral issues.
49. The social development of all pupils is good. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in activities that require cooperation with others such as drama, music and sporting events, as well as a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. In lessons, pupils work effectively in groups and support one another. The pupils in the learning support department are provided with good role models by the staff for supporting and sharing with others. The students in the sixth form make a major contribution to the school community through their involvement in the Reading Recovery programme. Through the curriculum, many subject areas provide good opportunities for the study of social issues and the development of society. In science, there is an emphasis on environmental issues and sustainability, with a successful 'Global Education Day' last year. In drama, students work on gender stereotyping and in food technology, the social issues of food are discussed. There is a range of educational visits such as geographical field trips, foreign language exchanges to France and Germany and a ski trip to Austria.
50. The school makes good provision for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions through both curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. They are also encouraged to develop an awareness of cultural diversity through subjects such as English, science, food technology, geography, history, art, music, drama and religious education. General studies lessons in the sixth form develop various cultural themes, including the study of artists from different cultures. Every three years the school organises a 'One World Week' where a range of global cultures are studied and pupils from the middle schools are invited to attend.
51. In September 1999, the school was awarded the Suffolk Certificate of Achievement for its provision for careers education and guidance. Guidance from Suffolk Careers Service is effective and is well supported by the provision in the careers library. Pupils are given good advice at times of transition between key stages, in preparation for the next phase of education and for work.

52. The provision for pupils to learn through work is satisfactory. All Year 11 pupils have one week of work experience. Briefings for pupils before their placement and debriefings on their return are good. Sixth form students have work experience either as part of their GNVQ course or as an extension activity to their academic studies.
53. Insufficient time is allocated for work-related learning at Key Stage 4. Teaching materials for work-related learning, including careers education, have yet to specify appropriate learning outcomes to meet with national guidance. The careers coordinator is right to have identified the need to review the provision for more appropriate work-related learning at Key Stage 4.
54. The community makes good use of the school and sports facilities. Links with other agencies and colleges are well developed. The school has good relationships and links with the contributory middle schools and in many subjects this extends to joint curriculum planning which ensures a smooth transition and continuity in learning for pupils from middle to high school. A strong feature of the links with the middle schools is the joint working on a wide range of issues of common interest, such as the home-school agreement and a Key Stage 3 booklet.
55. The school makes good use of speakers from the community to contribute to the general studies programme, particularly post-16. A trust fund set up by a group of local businesses has provided funding for a range of learning opportunities, such as a school and industry day.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

56. The school is an orderly community in which pupils' academic performance is closely monitored. Pupils in every year group receive good guidance and support to help them raise their levels of attainment. The social needs of pupils are catered for well.
57. Tutors know the members of their forms well and regularly engage with them in dialogue about the academic and social progress they are making. They provide a high level of care for the members of their forms and support them well in times of crisis. Teachers handle sensitive issues well. The mutual respect which is evident in almost all lessons contributes to the purposeful teaching and learning that occurs in the majority of subjects.
58. Heads of house and form tutors work together on matters of discipline and help those young people who need specialist guidance because of emotional or domestic problems. Heads of house play an important and effective role in the school, maintaining thorough records and meeting regularly with the Education Welfare Service to discuss those pupils causing concern.
59. A similar level of commitment is shown by the sixth form tutors to the students in their care. Sixth form students are supported well as individuals and by the monitoring of their progress towards individual learning targets. To assist this process, the school maintains a very good system for recording the regular discussions between students and their tutors about progress.
60. The school operates a system of sanctions and commendations, clearly understood by teachers and pupils alike, that has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes in lessons. The 'on report' system works well, helping pupils to improve their work or behaviour quickly. The school rewards particularly good work and outstanding effort by the award of commendation slips, which count towards house and headteacher commendations. Pupils in all years are motivated by these.

61. During the period of the inspection, poor classroom behaviour was observed only in those lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory. The permanent exclusion of pupils from the school happens rarely, and then only for extremely serious offences. Just over forty short, fixed-term exclusions have been used in the last year as part of the school's drive to reduce poor behaviour.
62. The school has very effective systems for monitoring pupils' progress in all subjects. Teachers work positively with pupils to help them avoid underachievement. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the use of a record of student progress enables pupils to plot their progress once a term against school and county expectations in each of their examination subjects. This is very good practice. Together with target setting in all subject areas, it has helped the school to raise its GCSE standards since the last inspection. In contrast, the day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is not consistent. In some subjects, such as English, science and religious education, books are marked regularly and the teachers provide comments which help the pupils improve their work. In art, some English lessons at Key Stage 4 and in drama, pupils are actively engaged in assessing their own work. In geography and mathematics, some teachers do not mark regularly and much of what is done is simply superficial ticking of pupils' work. Because of this, common errors are not addressed by the teachers, helpful advice is not given, and standards of presentation have declined. This aspect of assessment is not managed well by the school; it has no systems for the regular monitoring of the quality of teachers' marking.
63. The use of assessment data from tests is used effectively to set targets and permeates the academic life of the school. Teachers have a good understanding of statutory assessment requirements in all subjects and they regularly monitor pupils' progress against the relevant criteria. This process has helped to improve substantially the attainment of boys since the last inspection.
64. Although subject teachers know most of their pupils well, they are insufficiently aware of the learning and emotional difficulties of a small number of pupils. As a result, they are not always sufficiently familiar with the best ways of working with them. Individual action plans for those pupils with special educational needs who are not based in the study centre lack sufficient detail and are not used to plan individual work by the majority of teachers.
65. Attendance at the school closely matches the national average for a school of this type. Whilst some teachers contact parents as soon as a pupil is away, the practice is not consistent and some parents are not contacted until their child has missed several days of schooling. Teachers follow up unexplained absences when pupils return to school. Heads of house and the education welfare officer work together to deal with any truancy, or to support any pupil with a long-term absence problem. Some teachers are careful to ensure that pupils make up any work missed due to absence from school, but this practice is not consistent across all subjects.
66. Most teachers are aware of what to do if they suspect, or have disclosed to them, that an individual pupil may need protection. Although there is no regular in-service programme for all staff to maintain and update their knowledge of child protection procedures, written guidance is given to teachers, including new members of staff, about the possible signs and symptoms of child abuse. Not all teachers are aware of the signs of abuse but teachers of physical education are very aware of the issues. In the event of a child disclosing confidential information about matters such as physical or emotional abuse outside school, teachers know how to contact the designated senior member of staff responsible for child protection. This person has a good knowledge of the appropriate procedures. Arrangements for handling child protection issues in the event of this teacher being absent are not satisfactory.

Apart from this weakness, the school's arrangements for dealing with such matters comply with recommended procedures.

67. Disputes between pupils and instances of bullying are rare. On the few occasions when intimidation or harassment does take place, pupils are sufficiently confident to tell a member of staff, and the matter is usually dealt with swiftly and effectively by a head of house. Although the school does not have a coordinated approach to eliminate bullying, the climate that it has managed to create through assemblies and tutor group discussions is tolerant and friendly. The few pupils at the school from minority ethnic backgrounds integrate well with their peers. They have full access to the curriculum of the school and are making satisfactory progress.
68. With a few exceptions, the behaviour of pupils in the school both during lessons and at break-times is well managed by the teachers. Although the buildings are crowded, pupils move about in an orderly, safe and mature fashion. Behaviour in classrooms, laboratories and workshops is generally good and accidents in the school are infrequent. When they do occur, the school has good procedures for contacting parents and obtaining first aid and medical treatment. At present, only two teachers have current first aid certificates. They both teach practical subjects, but sometimes have to leave their lessons in order to deal with an accidental injury or a pupil who is feeling unwell. This is not a satisfactory state of affairs.
69. The school does not do enough to promote healthy and safe living amongst its pupils. Sound advice is given in PSHE, as part of the school's general studies programme, and also in food technology, but health and safety issues are not given a sufficiently high profile throughout the school. Although it has addressed those issues highlighted in the last inspection report, health and safety is still an area to continue to address as there are a number of new issues. The school is not sufficiently proactive in identifying risks. The school does not carry out regular health and safety audits. However, teachers of active and practical subjects, including science, technology and physical education, have carried out risk assessments for most activities. There are a number of hazards around the school, including unfenced ponds, damaged steps, uneven flooring and a narrow corridor constricted by the storage of furniture and cleaning equipment. The pupils' toilets are particularly unpleasant. Whilst the school manages pupils well as they board their buses at the end of the day, it is less effective in controlling pupils who drive or cycle to and from school, some of whom put themselves and others at risk.
70. The school ensures that its fire alarms and extinguishers are checked and maintained on an annual basis. Emergency evacuation drills are carried out two or three times each year. Although fire drill notices are displayed in the classrooms, signs in corridors are inadequate and not all pupils know the safest route out of the building.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

71. Partnership with parents is aided by the school's very good links with its contributing schools. This results in parents receiving good information about curriculum issues, transfer arrangements, pupil support and common policies (including behaviour, drugs awareness and assessment). This is exemplified by the liaison undertaken on the Home School Agreement. It brought together schools in the pyramid, parents, pupils and governors to produce a common agreement for the school and its contributory schools. This provides parents with a consistent approach that they fully understand.
72. Communications with parents are good; there is a weekly informative newsletter and regular parents' and careers evenings, which are well supported. The school

acknowledges the importance of parental involvement in school life and aims to develop and expand the successful parent partnership group.

73. The community makes good use of the school and sports facilities. Links with other agencies and colleges are well developed.
74. Parents expressed concerns at the inconsistencies in the setting of homework. These concerns were confirmed during the inspection. There are inconsistencies in the time requirement, marking and follow up of homework between subject departments.
75. The school makes good use of its assessment information in its termly short reports to parents. These give a numerical indication of each pupil's attainment and effort, and show progress against the pupil's projected targets. These reports are valued and understood by pupils. Parents also receive a much more detailed annual report from each subject teacher and house staff. These contain subject specific comments on progress, and advice as to how the pupil might best make greater progress. Parents appreciate the quality of the reports and make good use of the consultation evenings that are built into the annual reporting cycle. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed of their child's progress. There is a high level of parental involvement in interim and annual reviews.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

76. The leadership and management by its headteachers has been key to the success of the school in raising standards and improving since its last inspection. Currently, the school is very well led and managed by the new headteacher, and parents support this view. He has a clear vision for the future and understanding of current strengths and areas requiring development. The headteacher displays the ability to lead and sustain future improvement.
77. Central to the school's aims is its motto and programme 'Achievement for All'. The school has been particularly successful in fulfilling this and it has had a measurable impact on achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4. Consequently, it is planned to extend the 'Achievement for All' programme into the sixth form. To assist developments the hard-working senior management team has produced clear and concise policy documents and these provide staff and governors with the information they require to fulfil their responsibilities. However, documentation contains various versions of the school aims written for different groups and this does not support consistency in planning.
78. Although there are very good examples of leadership and management at all levels within the school, this is not uniform and results in inconsistent practices. Middle managers have been mostly effective in raising standards and some faculties and houses are extremely well run and organised. However, some whole-school issues are not handled with consistent thoroughness in all departments, for example, the quality of teaching, marking and homework. Issues as they arise in the school are not always addressed at the appropriate level of responsibility. As a result, senior managers and the headteacher are often overburdened by excessive detail and, at times, lose the capacity to deal with strategic issues effectively.
79. Delegation of leadership and management responsibilities throughout the school is difficult at the present time, as not all middle and senior managers have clear terms of reference and job descriptions to support them in addressing their roles and functions. It is not clear to all teachers that they have responsibility for achieving consistency through high level teaching skills, behaviour management and raising

achievement.

80. Within the special educational needs department there is strong leadership and management of the department is effective. However, individual education plans tend to be supportive only of work carried out within the special educational needs department, and do not indicate clear targets and plans for action which can be applied by subject staff. As a result, when specialist special educational needs staff are not directly involved, provision for special educational needs pupils is not sufficiently adapted to the needs of those pupils. In some lessons, good teaching and planning supports special educational needs pupils regardless of their individual education plan targets. In a few lessons, the lack of specialist advice means that subject teachers are not building in appropriate learning activities to ensure that special educational needs pupils make the maximum possible progress. Similarly, subject teachers' responses to reviews of individual education plans vary from useful, detailed information to superficial one word responses.
81. The senior management team is aware of the literacy issues faced by the school. It has not yet tackled these issues through its literacy development plan, which is at present too narrow in its focus and so does not promote the development of literacy skills, including reading across the curriculum. There is insufficient time allocated to the induction of pupils into the library in Year 9, and no dedicated cross-curricular time allocated for training pupils in the use of the library to support their GCSE and sixth form studies.
82. The governing body is hard-working and mainly fulfils its statutory responsibilities, including target setting. The chair of governors is clear about the direction the school should take and has a good grasp of its strengths and weaknesses. However, some statutory requirements are not fully met in relation to a daily act of collective worship, religious education in the sixth form, appraisal of teachers and minor omissions in the annual report to parents.
83. Governors are not always proactive in their requirements for information about developments in the school. Although they do challenge the school in meetings, challenges are based on data provided by the senior management team rather than on their own first-hand evidence gained from the school. Some governors are not clear about certain of their functions, for example, whether they operate within working parties or committees and the terms of reference for these groups.
84. The school has been making good use of a range of monitoring data, especially in relation to target setting and tracking pupils' progress. However, the quality of this process is not consistently high enough across the school to make the system as effective as possible. In addition, it has been developing effective monitoring and evaluation procedures relating to diagnoses of strengths and weaknesses within the school and actions required to address these. The issue of the inconsistent links between the school development plan and house and subject priorities, identified at the last inspection, has not been fully overcome.
85. A potentially effective system of monitoring and evaluation of teaching has been established but there are inconsistencies in the implementation of this between departments. As a result, although some of the weaknesses in teaching identified at the time of the last inspection have been overcome, others still exist. This means that although in six out of ten lessons the teaching is good or better, in one in ten it

is unsatisfactory.

86. The school has a structured process of induction for all new staff including newly qualified teachers. Strong links have been established with higher education and a well organised programme provides good support and development opportunities to University students on their school placements as part of the linked training of teachers. There is no system for staff appraisal, but governors have in place performance review procedures for the headteacher and deputy headteachers. A staff development policy, overseen by a coordinator, supported by a committee of volunteers, manage the allocation of staff development funding. However, it does not operate with negotiated or established whole-school criteria for allocating this funding, apart from individual department priorities. The school does not evaluate the impact on teaching and learning or undertake any value for money assessments of staff development activities.
87. The school development plan is well constructed and is effective in promoting the further improvement in the school. The headteacher oversees strategic planning and works with governors and members of the senior management team. The detailed planning process is well developed and includes middle managers and all staff. Priorities established are appropriate for both the short and long term. The long-term plan is extensively negotiated, is clear in structure and contains a well formulated curriculum and staffing model and associated financial plan. The short-term plan is well sequenced and whole-school and team plans are identified within it, with associated budget plans. Success criteria are not clear, as they tend to cover what needs to be done rather than setting sharp measurable outcomes. Departments are funded on a formula basis and there is also the facility to bid for additional funding from a development fund. This funding strategy shows a strong link between the development of educational priorities and spending.
88. The school is in a healthy state financially and the governors are actively monitoring the spending against budget plans. For example, after a deputy headteacher had identified that staffing levels exceeded the needs of the curriculum the governors challenged the school about the high staffing costs. As a result, staffing levels were reduced and the budget brought back in control. This occurred at a time of rising standards and since then results have continued to improve. Curriculum spending now almost exactly matches the income generated at each key stage. The school has good administrative systems for managing its financial affairs. Orders are processed smoothly, expenditure and commitments are properly accounted for, and regular budget control reports are scrutinised by governors and senior managers. The school operates with an appropriate financial reserve. The last full audit of the school was undertaken in 1996 and the recommendations of this were met fully.
89. The school financial plan is determined by the outcomes of the school development planning process, taking account of evaluations, reviews and team plans. Overall, it is a governors' committee that makes final recommendations regarding budget planning and budget monitoring. However, governors are not sufficiently involved in determining how the school uses its money. Communication and understanding about the school's finances between some governors, and between governors and the school's senior management team, are not always clear. Because of this there is a certain amount of confusion about the school's spending priorities. The school does not identify how specific grants are spent and governors are not sufficiently involved in determining spending priorities. The school receives certain funds that should be spent on specific purposes, including monies for pupils with special educational needs. The school does not monitor the effectiveness of its spending of such grants and, because it does not separate such monies from its main school budget, it is unable to identify how these grants are used. Spending on the school's study centre is higher than the income that this centre attracts. In spite of this, the

allocation of resources matches the curriculum and other needs of the school well.

90. Staffing levels are adequate for both teaching and administrative staff. Routine organisation and administration is good. Generally, there is a good match between the staff's qualifications, expertise and subjects taught. Governors have not reappointed a deputy headteacher since the recent promotion of a deputy headteacher to a headship. This provides them with the opportunity to review the management structure of the senior management team and throughout the school. The chair of governors is clear that a new structure is needed to focus on consistency of practice across the school and to strengthen the links between senior and middle managers, ensuring middle managers address whole-school issues as well as those within their particular area of responsibility. He is also aware that the structure needs to take account of future school priorities, for example, the proposed technology bid as well as current issues facing the school, such as, raising the quality of teaching, and issues related to buildings. Staff absence is not an issue but, when it does occur, the school does need to be more mindful of the impact on sixth form students if the absence is prolonged or occurs frequently, as provision of a supply teacher is not made. This is a concern rightly raised by parents.
91. The school has adequate accommodation to meet curriculum needs, despite room usage being very high thus leaving the school with little flexibility when planning the timetable, for example, in science. In the study centre, conditions are often very cramped and not conducive to creating a settled environment with the freedom of access and space necessary to support learning. The school buildings create issues, for example, the overcrowded corridors, lack of social areas for pupils and for sixth form private study. Despite some of the poor conditions pupils are mainly responsible and respectful of their school. However, the accommodation has an adverse effect on a significant minority of pupils who take advantage of the situation to misbehave. This confirms concerns expressed by parents. Despite the problems with the buildings, the school could do more to improve them. There are positive examples where teachers and departments have improved the quality of the environment, for example, the arts, music, history and modern foreign languages. However, many areas are drab and uninspiring, including some of the public areas and entrances. There are plans for a building programme to extend the size of the school to cater for more pupils, but many parents and governors have concerns as they see the school as already containing too many pupils. Instead, they want to improve the facilities they have without an increase in pupil numbers.
92. The school generally has a satisfactory level of resources. Expenditure has been increased to provide a satisfactory range of computer equipment. The library is currently an under-utilised resource but it is on the point of playing a more active cross-curricular role in the school. For example, 'Book Week' presented pupils with an engaging range of opportunities to develop their reading and library skills. However, the absence of appropriate library induction at all key stages means that pupils cannot, and do not, take full advantage of the library's resources. This results in a lack of consistency by departments in the use of the library. For example, English does not yet work closely with the library whereas history makes use of the library for research projects and the librarian makes up photo and resource packs for their use. However, the library does offer to a group of pupils the opportunity to develop both social and academic skills by them becoming active as library monitors in its maintenance and development. This group of pupils is highly enthusiastic and very well informed about the part they play in running the library.
93. The school spends a slightly higher proportion of its budget on resources than most schools of its type, but resource and asset management are casual. The school

seeks to get best value on major items of expenditure, including buildings maintenance, but it does not operate a formal 'best value' policy. The school's financial policies and practices do not indicate at what point competitive tenders should be obtained, or who is empowered to accept or reject them.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

94. In order to improve further the attainment and progress of all pupils and students, the governors, senior management team and staff should:

Improve further the quality of management in the school in order to achieve:

- improvement in the quality of unsatisfactory teaching by:
 - sharing the good and very good teaching practice which exists in the school;
 - monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching more systematically;
 - analysing the causes of weakness;
 - evaluating what needs to be done and how best to achieve improvement;
 - ensuring middle managers take prompt action to rectify identified weaknesses in teaching in their areas of responsibility;
 - establishing and implementing a system for the appraisal and assessment of the performance of teachers which informs teachers' professional development;
 - ensuring that staff development activities provide internal and external training focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
(Paragraphs 14, 16, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 61, 85, 86, 113, 124, 136, 138, 179, 196, 208, 220, 225).
- greater coherence and consistency in the implementation of school policies, for example assessment, marking, individual education plans, special educational needs and homework, by:
 - identifying and sharing good and very good practice;
 - regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision.
(Paragraphs 5, 29, 31, 62, 64, 65, 66, 74, 78, 80, 84, 85, 96, 117, 130, 167)
- more effective delegation within the school by:
 - establishing clear terms of reference and job descriptions with regard to roles and functions;
 - making clear responsibilities of individual teacher's in relation to raising standards;
 - ensuring that issues are addressed at the appropriate level of responsibility.
(Paragraphs 78, 79)

Improve the strategic leadership of the school by the governing body by:

- writing a definitive set of school aims that are implemented effectively;
- taking the opportunity to review the management structure, not only of the senior management team, but also throughout the school;
- clarifying the information required by governors to fulfil their duties and ensuring that this is available;
- ensuring that they meet their statutory and health and safety requirements in full.
(Paragraphs 35, 47, 69, 70, 77, 82, 83, 89, 90, 167, 203, 205)

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

- improve the school environment by using displays more effectively in rooms, corridors and entrances to enliven the school and match best practice in some other areas; (Paragraph 91)
- develop and implement more effective asset management and best value systems; (Paragraphs 89, 93)
- ensure a coherent PSHE programme is provided throughout the school. (Paragraph 44).

OTHER FEATURES OF THE SCHOOL

Area Support Centre (Study Centre)

95. The school has a study centre currently with 34 places for pupils with statements of special educational needs for a range of learning difficulties. The staff working in the Centre are clearly committed to ensuring the best possible achievements for the pupils whom they teach. The study centre provides access to a broad, balanced curriculum for the pupils it supports. It ensures they gain opportunities for the widest range of accreditation possible in relation to their needs and abilities. The work of the study centre is capably led by the special educational needs coordinator.
96. Teaching in the study centre is good, based on confident and relaxed management of well planned lessons which use question and answer techniques asking pupils to explain how they arrive at their answer or why they chose a particular method to work it out. Support staff are well used to target one-to-one time where it is best needed, for example, to help improve reading. This is obviously effective as illustrated by one Year 11 pupil who, when asked to read said, "I'll read again. I love reading!" Assessment is used to guide planning, but is not yet sufficiently rigorous to assure the maximum benefit to all pupils. individual education plans are operating for those pupils in the study centre but many lack the specific targets, detailed methodologies and clear timescales required to assess learning outcomes.
97. In the study centre progress is good overall when judged both in relation to what pupils are required to learn lesson by lesson and when judged in terms of GCSE results. This is not always described clearly or in enough detail in subject reports for annual reviews. Progress since the last inspection has been maintained and this is illustrated by the improvement in the average pass rate in GCSEs. Links with parents support and extend parents' involvement in their children's progress.
98. Pupils generally behave in a calm, purposeful and confident manner, relate to one another constructively and enjoy friendly relationships with staff. They are well motivated and maintain concentration and interest in lessons often working independently when completing examination coursework, answering questions about Anglia Railways timetables or measuring and calculating the radius, diameter and circumference of a circle. Only occasionally does the behaviour of some individuals interfere with the progress of others.
99. The study centre provides a wealth of support to those pupils on its role in both pastoral and academic areas which raises achievement and maintains progress. The staff make sterling efforts to ensure pupils keep up with coursework, provide individual help when pupils go on work experience or attend a college link course, run the homework club two days per week both at lunchtime and after school and there are many moments where adults provide sensitive and tactful advice and counselling.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 220 |
| 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 |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 2 | 21 | 35 | 30 | 9 | 2 | 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 | Y 9 – Y 11 | Sixth form |
|---|------------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 1035 | 325 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 154 | |

| Special educational needs | Y9 – Y 11 | Sixth form |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 47 | |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 140 | |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 2 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 13 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 35 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|-------|
| | % | | % |
| School data | 8.3% | School data | 0.74% |
| National comparative data | 7.9% | 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

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 9 | 173 | 171 | 344 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 104 | 114 | 115 |
| | Girls | 134 | 116 | 104 |
| | Total | 238 | 230 | 219 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 69 [56] | 67 [66] | 64 [66] |
| | National | 63 [65] | 62 [60] | 55 [57] |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 26 [28] | 38 [37] | 33 [37] |
| | National | 28 [35] | 38 [36] | 23 [27] |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 95 | 117 | 124 |
| | Girls | 120 | 114 | 122 |
| | Total | 215 | 231 | 249 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 63 [58] | 68 [73] | 73 [67] |
| | National | 64 [61] | 64 [64] | 60 [61] |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 22 [24] | 34 [43] | 45 [32] |
| | National | 31 [30] | 37 [37] | 28 [30] |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | 99 | 182 | 158 | 340 |

| 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 | 102 | 175 | 178 |
| | Girls | 106 | 152 | 155 |
| | Total | 208 | 327 | 333 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 61 [53] | 96 [96] | 98 [98] |
| | National | 46.3 [44.6] | 90.7 [89.8] | 95.7 [95] |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 47 [44.4] |
| | National | 37.8 [36.8] |

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

| Vocational qualifications | | Number | % success rate |
|--|----------|--------|----------------|
| Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School | N/A | N/A |
| | National | N/A | N/A |

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|
| 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 | 1999 | 54 | 51 | 105 |

| 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 | 17.8 | 16.2 | 17.1 [16.5] | N/A | 2.7 | 2.7 [4.5] |
| National | 17.7 | 18.1 | 17.9 [17.6] | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.8 [2.8] |

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

| Vocational qualifications | | Number | % success rate |
|---|----------|--------|----------------|
| Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School | 14 | 71.4 |
| | National | | 72.9 |

| International Baccalaureate | | Number | % success rate |
|---|----------|--------|----------------|
| Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied | School | N/A | N/A |
| | National | | 82.5 |

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 2 |
| Black – African heritage | 3 |
| Black – other | 5 |
| Indian | 1 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 3 |
| White | 1343 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 3 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | | |
| Black – African heritage | 1 | |
| Black – other | | |
| Indian | | |
| Pakistani | | |
| Bangladeshi | | |
| Chinese | | |
| White | 32 | 2 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | | |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y 9 – Y 13

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 80.5 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 16.9 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y 9 – Y 13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 21 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 558 |

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 77.9 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 2 | N/A |
| Key Stage 3 | 23.2 |
| Key Stage 4 | 20.2 |

Financial information

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

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 3,194,036 |
| Total expenditure | 3,215,017 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,425 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 117,270 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 96,289 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1350

Number of questionnaires returned

305

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 35 | 51 | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 47 | 49 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 23 | 55 | 8 | 3 | 11 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 21 | 57 | 16 | 4 | 3 |
| The teaching is good. | 26 | 61 | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 35 | 48 | 13 | 3 | 2 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 51 | 39 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 60 | 38 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 23 | 54 | 16 | 3 | 4 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 33 | 54 | 4 | 1 | 7 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 34 | 52 | 7 | 2 | 5 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 25 | 52 | 7 | 3 | 12 |

No substantial concerns emerged from the results of the survey of parents and carers.

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Thirty-eight parents attended the meeting with the Registered Inspector. During the meeting parents expressed views that:

- music and science were considered to be good in the school;
- the less able and most able pupils are identified and well supported, other middle-ability pupils receive less attention;
- written communication with parents, for example, newsletter is helpful, but there is some concern about the quality of information in computer generated reports;
- Home-School Agreements seem to have little impact;
- in a number of areas there are concerns about consistency of practice, for example setting, marking, and feedback on homework, use of homework diary, quality of follow-

up to parents' concerns and response to written communication, variable support from form tutors;

- the extra-curricular provision is good;
- the behaviour of some pupils is adversely affecting the learning of others. Unsatisfactory behaviour is tolerated in some classes and there is inconsistency amongst staff regarding attitudes and values promoted;
- there are general issues related to the school building, for example, overcrowding, lack of toilet facilities, bags carried;
- the school is positive in its response to parents' suggestions and concerns;
- information and guidance given to pupils regarding Key Stage 4 course choice, sixth form guidance is good.

Other issues raised by parents

A large number of letters were submitted by parents to the Registered Inspector and the views expressed were that:

- discipline is lax – inappropriate behaviour is allowed to go unchecked in class and bad language is adversely affecting learning;
- there is an issue in school regarding variation in quality of teaching;
- not all teachers expect pupils to work hard and achieve their best – particularly in middle sets;
- the school lives up to its motto 'Achievement for All';
- there are problems with teaching in German;
- pupils in the study centre are well supported;
- the weekly newsletter is impressive and communication has improved recently;
- there is a variation in views ranging from insufficient homework to too much homework.

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

ENGLISH

100. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils achieved results close to the national averages, although slightly below those attained by similar schools. This represents an improvement from the previous year's results, and an improvement in the attainment of boys in particular. These are gains resulting from the department's work in preparing pupils more effectively for the demands of examinations. More pupils attain results at level four than nationally, however, and more than were assessed at that level by their teachers. This reflects attainment in classrooms, where lower middle-attaining pupils are not always identified and then challenged to reach their potential. Although results at Key Stage 3 have remained below those achieved by pupils in mathematics and science, the picture of achievement in classrooms is an optimistic one, with standards in aspects of writing in particular being higher than test results for 1999 would suggest.
101. Pupils achieved results that were above national averages in GCSE English in 1999, and that were well above national averages in GCSE English literature. This represents a rise in results over the last four years. Fewer boys than nationally gain the highest GCSE grades, but boys perform well above national averages in GCSE English literature. As yet, results in English do not match the performance of the most successful subjects in the school, but this is an improving situation. Pupils receiving support from the study centre make very good progress.
102. In the sixth form, standards of attainment are at least satisfactory and often good. Pupils achieve pass grades close to national averages, although there has been a decline over three years in the number of pupils attaining grade As. This is also reflected in classrooms, where pupils are not always offered opportunities to manage their own learning or to pursue independent thought, both of which are essential to achieving the highest grades.
103. Throughout Key Stage 3, standards of speaking and listening for both boys and girls are close to national expectations. This is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection report, where weaknesses were identified in the oral work of boys of all abilities. Teachers place a high value on the contributions that pupils make by providing well managed classrooms that offer pupils the time, space and security to think aloud and to make tentative hypotheses. Literary texts, particularly Shakespeare, are used successfully to inspire pupils in role plays and to encourage them to make considered and detailed responses. There is some under attainment by a few pupils, mostly boys, when working in class or paired discussions. This occurs when teachers are overly directive so that genuine exploratory dialogue does not develop, or where teachers set oral tasks that do not focus on the improvement of skills. In these contexts, pupils complete the work without making real progress in learning.
104. Standards of speaking and listening are in line with national expectations in lessons at Key Stage 4, though there are differences of attainment both between and within groups of pupils. Where standards of speaking and listening are highest, it is because teachers have given careful consideration to grouping pupils, taking into account gender, social mix and academic performance, and are rigorous in insisting that all pupils consider and develop fully their responses to questions. All teachers pay considerable attention to developing pupils' vocabulary and are rewarded by the relish with which pupils borrow and use language from the literary texts they study.

105. There is some under attainment in lessons where teachers do not make sufficiently clear to pupils their expectations of what makes an effective speaker or listener, or where teachers underestimate their pupils' capacity to respond. Systematic and consistent use is not made of assessment data to adjust the pitch of teaching to the needs of pupils and, on occasion teachers consolidate rather than extend pupils' learning. For example, in lessons where texts have been explored in some depth by the class, teachers frequently provide dictated or written notes, which do not allow pupils to take the next step of developing into writing what they already do successfully in speech.
106. At Key Stage 3, pupils meet national expectations in writing and, in some aspects of their work, exceed them. This represents a rise in standards of attainment on those achieved in the 1999 national tests results. Because pupils are given the opportunity to tackle challenging writing tasks in small stages and because their written work is marked carefully, specifying points for improvement, they write flexibly and confidently in a range of styles. Teachers pay explicit attention to extending pupils' vocabulary and to the structuring of sentences, and this results in the conscious crafting of language that is a characteristic of the high standard of the written work of pupils of all abilities. For some groups of pupils of lower middle ability, an overemphasis on comprehension exercises and on dictation compromises the range of writing that is tackled, and is not justified by its impact on pupils' progress in writing independently. Weaknesses in spelling are evident in both Key Stages 3 and 4 throughout the ability range. This is due to the school not using a broad range of strategies, including the teaching of drafting and proofing skills, and instead relying on testing which is not directly improving spelling.
107. Pupils at Key Stage 4 attain standards in some aspects of their writing, particularly in more formal literary essays, that exceed national expectations. They respond to the effective teaching they have received with work that is fluent, substantial and grammatically accurate. Media assignments allow pupils to extend their techniques of written interpretation and analysis, as well as to employ a technical vocabulary specific to the subject. This is good practice, for example, when pupils in Year 11 are asked to review their own writing they do so with perception. At present pupils are offered both too few opportunities to make choices about the form of writing that they are to undertake and to evaluate its fitness for purpose and impact on the reader. This disadvantages all young writers, but the most able in particular, in media assignments, overall attainment is often high as pupils are more clearly aware both of the reader and the purpose for which they are writing. The match of teaching to pupils' ability is most successful in Key Stage 4, but when writing in lessons some pupils of lower middle ability do not receive the help that they need to reach their potential. Teachers rely on giving individual support to pupils rather than on providing different levels of work and, on occasion this support is too brief, or not provided sufficiently promptly, to maintain the pace of these pupils' learning.
108. Standards of reading at Key Stage 3 are often close to and sometimes exceed national expectations, particularly when pupils are engaged with reading 'between the lines' of literary texts. Teachers are skilled at making reading both relevant and enjoyable and by doing so engage the interest and commitment of pupils, evident in the speed with which they settle to work, the intensity of the silence in classrooms when they read and the energy which they invest in creating dramatic interpretations of texts. Standards are highest when the teachers act as well informed guides, leading pupils carefully through the process of interpretation, and pupils use confidently the strategies they have learned to tackle their own reading, for example, in exploring the imagery of pilgrimage in Romeo's courtship of Juliet.

Where standards are lower, this is because over-teaching of examination texts prevents pupils from developing personal response both orally and in writing. This inhibits some very able pupils from attaining at the highest levels, where personal response is essential, as well as constraining unnecessarily pupils of middle ability by overly prescriptive and directed teaching. The department does not make sufficient use of pupils' personal reading to extend the breadth of their response to examination texts. Where the needs of pupils are taken into account in teachers' planning, for example, by the provision of 'translations' of Shakespeare, pupils of lower prior attainment make good progress in demonstrating not only an understanding of character but of imagery and of theme.

109. At Key Stage 4, the picture of attainment is similar, although teachers are imaginative in providing a broad and challenging range of literary material to which pupils of all abilities respond well. Teachers are particularly skilled in building pupils' confidence through carefully constructed approach-routes to difficult books and poems and by teaching explicitly the reading techniques that pupils need. Where attainment in reading is less satisfactory at Key Stage 4, it is when pupils' initially superficial responses are insufficiently challenged or when pupils and teachers are engaged together in a dispiriting trawl through texts for the sole purpose of being examined on them.
110. The picture of attainment in sixth form lessons is, overall, satisfactory. The detail of the picture reveals that a few pupils attain good standards, for example, in reading inferentially when studying the king's speeches to Hamlet and to Laertes, and some GCSE pupils in the sixth form attain standards that represent very good attainment in relation to their ability. Some pupils in A level groups, however, do not contribute orally in class or in sufficient depth when in groups, and this impacts on their own attainment as well as that of others who cannot benefit from their work. An example of this is when students fail to share and discuss their responses to teachers' analysis of their work. A small proportion of students in Year 13 focus in their written response to literary texts on characterisation rather than on written style and dramatic impact.
111. Standards of teaching are, overall, satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and are good at Key Stage 4. However, this conceals the fact that a small number of lessons in both key stages are unsatisfactory.
112. The best teaching enables pupils of average ability to make good progress and to attain results, in English literature at Key Stage 4 in particular, that represent a maximising of their potential. It is characterised by teachers' depth of subject knowledge and assured technique in communicating that knowledge; by the effective teaching of grammatical concepts that improve pupils' writing; and by the translation of high expectations of pupils into carefully sequenced and briskly paced lessons. When teachers are perceptive in their grouping of pupils this has a positive impact on less eager learners. Clear boundaries are set for behaviour and are reinforced actively and with good humour. A key strength of the department is in the use of team teaching with teachers from the Study Support Centre, which enables pupils at high-risk of underachieving to tackle very demanding work successfully, for example, an analysis of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry in which pupils delicately disentangled a chain of extended metaphor. Assessment in these lessons is carried out through questioning and through close scrutiny of work, and teachers have an accurate and thorough knowledge of pupils' abilities. Pupils respond well to these lessons and are committed and conscientious, often making rapid progress and completing substantial amounts of written work.
113. The unsatisfactory teaching results from inadequate planning to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, where lower middle-ability attainers do not

always receive the provision they require to enable them to make progress in developing independence in reading and writing. On occasion, teachers do not establish a sufficiently robust and assertive presence in classrooms, and pupils are able to avoid learning by low level but distracting conversation, by the slow pace of their work and, particularly in the case of boys, by offering superficial responses to questions. Pupils who are not taking examinations in English at Year 11 are not adequately provided for in lessons, and are a distraction to others.

114. In the sixth form, the teaching is almost always good and is on occasion inspirational, for example, when leading reluctant students through a difficult comparison of texts in a GCSE resit group, or when guiding A level pupils through the ambiguities and paradoxes presented by 'A Knowledge of Angels.' Lessons are well prepared, and the best plans lead students through a spiralling and increasingly intense encounter with the text. The pace of lessons, particularly for GCSE, is brisk and teachers maintain high expectations of students whatever their academic ability.
115. In GCSE groups, teachers make sure that students are aware that the responsibility for learning lies with them. In some A level groups, however, learners are unduly passive in their response, and this is not always sufficiently vigorously challenged by teachers.
116. Improvement has been made in each of the areas identified in the 1995 inspection of English, but progress has not been made consistently in all of them. Where the department has taken direct and focused action on an issue it has been successful, for example, in improving the attainment of boys, where it has been left to individual teachers to take action, progress is uneven, for example, in meeting the needs of more able pupils in Year 9. In the case of developing personal reading, progress has been too slow. Further action needs to be taken to ensure that the effectiveness of the various strategies used to raise the attainment of boys are evaluated; that more able pupils are routinely provided with opportunities to extend their skills, particularly in speaking, and in writing in response to reading, and that the department has a shared view of the importance it assigns to the role of drafting and proof-reading in the development of pupils' writing. At the time of the last inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed in the English department. This picture has altered, with a small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching in lessons at both key stages.
117. The English department retains detailed data that enables it to monitor pupils' performance and teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' abilities across the three attainment targets. Procedures for assessing attainment are sound and the department uses a portfolio of accurately levelled work to support its judgements. Practice is inconsistent in the use of assessment data to inform planning. Some teachers use it directly and effectively to group pupils but, on the whole, it is insufficiently exploited as a means of adapting teaching to meet the needs of pupils, particularly those pupils in mixed-ability groups at Key Stage 3. The evaluation of teaching is insufficiently developed within the department and as a result opportunities have not been created to develop shared understandings of the subject and to ensure consistency of good quality provision.
118. The head of department provides a clear academic and literary direction for the department, as a result of which most pupils thrive. Measures taken to improve test results at Key Stage 3 have been successful, confirming the department's correct analysis of its priorities for development. The department has a shared commitment to educational achievement which is not, however, fully translated into consistency of practice.

MATHEMATICS

119. Over the last four years, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has been above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national tests for 14 year-olds in 1999 was close to both the national average and the average for similar schools. Pupils' achievements in lessons also match with the expected standards. Most pupils have satisfactory skills of algebraic manipulation, and confidently answer questions involving percentage increase and decrease. Higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of Pythagoras' Theorem and are solving simple problems in trigonometry. Pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics are not as developed as their skills in other areas of mathematics. This is partly because they are not given sufficient opportunities to develop these skills.
120. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades in GCSE examinations has risen over the last three years. The increase in the school has been greater than the national increase, and attainment has improved since the last inspection. In the GCSE examinations in 1999 59 per cent of pupils achieved grades of A*-C compared with the national average of 46 per cent. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher grades of A*-A was also above the national average, but fewer girls than boys attained the highest grade. Pupils achieve well in lessons, with the achievements of pupils in the top sets being particularly high. Many of these pupils solve problems using the Sine and Cosine Rules, and devise strategies for converting recurring decimals to fractions. These high standards are due in part to the very good teaching of these sets, but also the very good motivation of the pupils themselves.
121. The proportion of students passing A level mathematics in 1999 was above the national average. The percentage attaining the higher grades A-B was close to the national average, whereas the percentage attaining the highest grade was below the national average. There was a significant difference between the relative attainment of boys and girls. A greater proportion of boys than girls attained grades A*-C, but 28 per cent of boys attained an A grade whereas no girls attained an A grade. Nationally, there was very little difference. The attainment of boys overall was significantly better than that of girls, whereas nationally girls attainment was slightly better than that of boys. In addition, there was a significantly smaller proportion of girls studying A level mathematics than nationally. This is a continuing trend in the school. The school needs to examine the reasons for these differences and take action to try and correct this imbalance. Students' achievements in lessons are above average, though there are some weaknesses in the achievements of a minority of students in Year 13. Most students in Year 13 have appropriate algebraic skills, integrate simple polynomials and solve problems involving the normal distribution.
122. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons are a strength. They are almost always satisfactory or better, and are good overall. The attitudes of pupils in the upper sets in Key Stage 4 are very good. Pupils listen carefully to teachers' explanations and questions and concentrate well. They work with persistence on questions from the textbook or worksheet, and persevere when the work is difficult or rather mundane. They willingly volunteer answers to questions and are keen to demonstrate what they know and have learned. Relationships are generally good. Relationships in the top sets in Key Stage 4 are often excellent. Pupils in these sets work together and support one another very well. They are very keen to succeed and celebrate one another's achievements. For example, in one lesson the pupils became very excited when the teacher began to announce who had been awarded certificates in the Sharp UK Intermediate Maths Challenge. There was a spontaneous and lively round of applause as the certificate winners were announced, and pupils excitedly congratulated one another.

123. The quality of teaching in mathematics has improved since the last inspection. There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching of mathematics. The best teaching was seen in the upper sets in Key Stage 4. Lessons are planned appropriately with clear learning objectives. They are usually part of a coherently planned sequence of work that helps the majority of pupils to learn the necessary skills in a very structured way. Although the teachers try to ensure that work planned for a lesson builds on previous lessons, insufficient attention is paid to assessing what individual pupils already know, understand and can do. This means that some pupils move on to harder work before they are ready, whilst other pupils find the work insufficiently challenging. The learning of these pupils is therefore more limited. This was a finding of the last inspection and insufficient progress has been made in this area. Teachers' explanations are clear, and they give good support to pupils whilst they work on written questions. Although teachers in the mathematics department are now employing a greater variety of teaching styles than at the last inspection, there is still a need to ensure that all teachers use a wider range of learning activities across all sets, including more opportunities for investigative work. In the best lessons, teachers question pupils effectively, asking open questions that require pupils to explain their answers and their methods. This questioning helps pupils to understand their work better and involves them actively in the lesson. Class management is good, particularly in the upper sets. Here, the teachers create a relaxed working atmosphere where pupils' ideas are valued and pupils' independence is encouraged. There is a proportion of lessons where the quality of teaching is less than satisfactory, and this is predominantly in lower sets. In these lessons, pupils' learning is limited either because of an inappropriate choice of activity that does not develop pupils' understanding, or because the activity is insufficiently challenging. In these lessons, pupils are encouraged to try and learn rules and follow routines that they do not understand. This means that they often misapply the rules they are taught. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. A lot of work in pupils' books is unmarked and there are very few constructive comments. The quality of marking has not improved since the last inspection, but overall the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has decreased significantly.
124. There has been an improvement in the schemes of work for Key Stage 3 and 4 since the last inspection. Opportunities for the use of computers and investigative tasks have now been written into them. The day-to-day management of the department is effective. The head of mathematics now needs to take a more strategic role in planning for continued development and improvement in mathematics teaching and learning. The work of the department, including the quality of teaching, is not sufficiently monitored and evaluated. Consequently, the best practice in the department is not shared and weaknesses are not identified and supported.

SCIENCE

125. The science department has many strengths. By the end of Year 9, pupils achieve standards in science that are above national averages with a significant proportion being well above average. The school enters a higher proportion of pupils for GCSE science than schools nationally. In 1999, virtually all pupils achieved a grade at GCSE with a higher than average percentage achieving higher grades (A*-C). The percentage of pupils achieving these higher grades has risen over recent years. In comparison with similar schools, the science GCSE results are well above average.
126. Teachers make good use of practical and investigatory work to aid pupils' learning. This leads to high standards in these aspects of science. For example, in an

investigation of photosynthesis, pupils in Year 10 identified the range of factors that affect the process and to design appropriate experiments to investigate the effect of each of these.

127. Standards in A level chemistry and physics are close to national averages. Biology results are below national averages but show satisfactory progress when students' previous attainments are taken into account. Advanced level students are willing to work hard, are very attentive, respond well to questions and do their work conscientiously. In a physics lesson when students were working on their A level assignments, their work showed evidence of wider reading and they discussed and debated their findings in a knowledgeable way. However, students on science A level courses do not always take sufficient responsibility for their own learning by reading, to prepare for or follow up lessons, or by doing work in addition to that set.
128. The standards which pupils attain have improved since the last inspection and the very few weaknesses in the previous report have been addressed.
129. Teaching is usually good, sometimes very good and almost always satisfactory or better. These high standards of teaching have been sustained since the last inspection. Each class is taught by a teacher who is a specialist in the relevant science subject. These arrangements allow teachers to use their expertise to provide detailed explanations, ask challenging questions and provide examples that allow pupils to learn at a good pace and achieve high standards. This pace of learning is reinforced by teachers' high expectations of pupils' achievements and of how much they will achieve in the time. Careful attention is paid to ensuring that pupils have the necessary knowledge before moving on to more difficult work. For example, in a chemistry lesson, the teacher ensured that all pupils understood the concepts of relative atomic and molecular masses before tackling more difficult work on molar concentrations.
130. Teachers encourage pupils' independence during investigations by providing clear instructions, and expecting pupils to take responsibility for their own notes on procedures and findings. The management of pupils' behaviour is a strength of the teaching. In nearly all lessons, where teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and teaching sustains the pupils' interest, pupils behave very well. Teachers mark pupils' work, usually at least fortnightly. This marking informs the pupils of the standards they have achieved and, in a few cases, gives pupils guidance on how to improve their work. In a few cases, where the pupils were absent when the books were collected, books have not been marked for some time. A small proportion of pupils' books also contains too much incomplete work. Teaching of all three sciences at A level is usually good or very good, although more challenging work where appropriate and a faster pace of working would further enhance standards in biology, particularly for higher-attaining pupils.
131. The careful planning and record-keeping within the department enhance the rate of pupils' learning. Detailed schemes of work ensure that syllabuses and programmes of study are followed progressively and at an appropriate pace. The detailed records of pupils' attainments and the good use of records from the pupils' previous schools ensure that pupils are placed in the correct teaching groups and their progress is monitored. Appropriate action is taken in response to the information gained through this monitoring and, in some cases, pupils have been moved between sets.
132. Management of the subject, a strength of the last inspection, continues to be strong. There are well established and well organised systems and procedures that lead to the smooth running of the department. The closer monitoring of pupils' achievements and of the quality of teaching, with followup action, has further

enhanced the impact of management on the standards achieved by the department. For example, the pupils' progress files allow the head of faculty to monitor closely the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. An internal review of the biology and chemistry department, which involved the headteacher, has also contributed to the on-going improvement of provision.

ART

133. Standards in art are satisfactory in Year 9 and good at Key Stage 4. Sixth form students achieve satisfactory and sometimes good results in a range of examination courses. Examination results have improved considerably since the last inspection and have remained consistently above the national average, with 66 per cent of candidates entered for GCSE in 1999 gaining A* - C grades. Students taking A level regularly achieve pass grades.
134. Most Year 9 pupils are producing some work which meets national expectations, and in some classes there are more able artists who achieve higher standards because they are more prepared to experiment in their work, such as when they are trying to create unusual collage effects in a block printing project. Most pupils have well developed drawing skills and produce work from imagination as well as observation. Pupils talk about their work in a way that shows they have thought carefully about it, but they do not make extensive use of technical art vocabulary. Opportunities to learn about the use of information technology in artwork are limited.
135. The lack of confidence in experimenting is evident in some pupils following GCSE courses. These pupils tend to limit themselves to a fairly narrow range of media, and are unable to explore information technology possibilities because of the lack of provision at Key Stage 3. Most pupils, however, have well prepared portfolios. Preparation work gives a clear indication of development, and more able pupils make good connections between their own work and that of established artists. Sixth form students are working towards A level, AS level and, in some cases, GCSE. All the work seen was at least satisfactory, and there are some examples of good quality work, especially where students had particularly well developed drawing and painting skills. Thematic work on human images was particularly strong. Students pursuing GCSE photography in only two terms gained a good level of insight into manipulating images, and this was particularly strong where they had used computers at home to enhance their work.
136. This improvement has been brought about by more consistency in the quality of teaching. There is a wide range of expertise in the department, and all art teachers know their subject well. When they are giving advice to individual pupils, teachers use their own skills and knowledge very effectively, and adjust their advice well to suit the needs of the individual pupil. They analyse shortcomings and make good suggestions about how these can be remedied. On some occasions, this happens at the expense of ensuring that the whole class makes good progress and, as a result, a few less committed pupils do not make full use of the time they are given to complete their work. Some teachers use good strategies to maintain the pace of lessons and these should be shared more deliberately throughout the department. Procedures to ensure continuity with what pupils have learned in their previous schools need more development.
137. Relationships with pupils are generally good, with pupils ready to listen and act on their teacher's advice. Some Year 9 classes tend to be very noisy, but most pupils take interest in their work and involve themselves in art activities. Art is very popular at Key Stage 4, and large numbers of pupils choose to pursue the GCSE course, which demonstrates both an interest in the subject and the regard in which teachers

are held. However, it also has an impact on the department's resources. Finding storage space and sufficient exhibition space during the examination period create difficulties for the department. Take-up in the current Year 10 is higher than ever, and resourcing for art needs to be reviewed by senior management.

138. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Examination results have been improved. Appropriate schemes of work are now in place, and care has been taken to ensure greater consistency across the department, although there is still a need to develop in a minority of lessons consistent teaching strategies for maintaining the pace of the lessons. This should become a focus for department monitoring. There is a need to develop opportunities to use information technology in artwork, and improve the quality of information about work completed in contributing schools.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

139. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, pupils' results were close to the national average. Inspection evidence shows that the attainment of the current Year 9 pupils is above the national expectation. For example, pupils show good understanding of mechanisms and of the design process when designing pop-up cards. They demonstrate a good range of graphic skills, present their work to a high standard, produce imaginative ideas and show accurate marking and cutting skills when making pop-up cards. When manufacturing printed circuit boards or cutting and shaping metal to make a multi-purpose tool, many pupils mark out accurately and drill, cut, shape and solder with precision and control. Evaluation skills are well developed, for example, when comparing the cost-effectiveness of kitchen appliances by weighing the evidence thoroughly and coming to sound conclusions.
140. Results in public examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 have shown significant overall improvement over the past four years. In 1999, GCSE results were well above national averages in graphics, food technology and electronics, where a significant number of pupils gain the highest grades. Results in resistant materials, however, remain well below national averages. Inspection evidence suggests that the school is on course to meet its overall target of 58 per cent of pupils gaining grades A*-C (a slight increase on 1999 results), though standards in resistant materials remain a weakness. When designing packaging or CD covers, higher-attaining pupils research their projects thoroughly, develop ideas effectively, produce excellent quality graphics work and use a good range of techniques. Pupils show good gains in knowledge of electronics or of nutrition. Evaluative skills are well developed in terms of relating the finished product to the original design specification. Folders are well organised and fully meet examination requirements. Practical work is well executed. In resistant materials, whilst research is reasonably well carried out, it lacks depth because pupils fail to consider the full range of product analysis; ideas are not well developed and specifications and evaluations tend to be limited.
141. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good, though there is some poor teaching in resistant materials that results in unsatisfactory learning. Most teachers have good subject knowledge enabling them to help pupils effectively acquire new skills or learning through teacher exposition, demonstration or discussion, for example, in Year 11 when talking about food products for slimmers. Questions are often used well both in whole-class discussion and when working with individual pupils to challenge their thinking or to help them develop ideas, for example, when designing and making pop-up cards in Year 9. Practical skills are well taught and

high quality is encouraged, for example, when making a multipurpose tool in Year 9. Teachers use a good range of appropriate learning activities that help maintain pupils' interest and add pace to the lessons. Planning of these activities is generally good, but overall insufficient emphasis is placed on what pupils should know, understand or be able to do by the end of a lesson or unit of work.

142. Pupils are well managed and teachers have high expectations of behaviour, resulting in purposeful and productive learning in most lessons. Behaviour is good or very good in most lessons and pupils show positive attitudes to the subject. Pupils are generally interested in the work and enjoy the lessons. They listen carefully to instructions and contribute to discussion. Good relationships exist between pupils and adults. Almost all pupils show some initiative when given the opportunity, for example, when carrying out research in Years 10 and 11. They take responsibility for clearing up rooms, looking after equipment and putting work away. Pupils can be trusted to work in other parts of the school, for instance in order to use computers for graphics.
143. Most teachers give pupils good feedback, either through whole-class review, individual support or written comments, stating clearly what they need to do in order to improve. This effectively supports the attainment of high standards. Where teaching is poor, tasks are undemanding, for example, in resistant materials the evaluations pupils make lack challenge and the methods used are not always suitable to support the desired learning. Pupils are often unclear about what they are doing or why and teacher expectation is low. This results in limited understanding of design processes and overall poor progress.
144. The department is well led and managed overall, creating a good team spirit and clear direction to the work of the department. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been revised and liaison with contributory schools is good, resulting in improved design work and better progression. Strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained and weaknesses have mostly been tackled effectively. Monitoring of pupils attainment and progress is effective in raising attainment. Review of departmental planning, resources and procedures is effective in establishing areas for future development. This has resulted in significant improvements in standards since the last inspection. Staff development activities have been effective in raising the general quality of teaching throughout the department. However, though some appropriate action has been taken, weaknesses remain in the teaching of resistant materials and standards here are still well below national averages at the end of Key Stage 4.

GEOGRAPHY

145. Standards at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory. In lessons, higher-attaining pupils make good progress and average and lower-attaining pupils consolidate their learning appropriately. Both girls and boys achieve well. For example, pupils have a sound understanding of the features of developing and developed countries. By the end of Year 9 most pupils reach standards which meet national expectations, as judged by the 1999 teachers' assessments.
146. Standards at Key Stage 4 are good. Some pupils produce work of a very high standard, such as the investigation into homelessness in Brazil. All pupils produce course work of at least a satisfactory standard. For example, the vast majority of pupils display a good understanding of physical processes such as the formation of volcanoes or causes of coastal erosion, and of human geography such as the increasing need for sustainable energy sources. Inspection evidence is borne out

by the results in 1999 and over time.

147. GCSE results (A*-C grades) in 1999 showed standards were above both the national average and similar schools. Fifty-seven per cent of pupils obtained A*-C grades, which shows an upward trend in results over the last three years. The attainment of boys in 1999 was significantly better than the national average.
148. In the sixth form standards are satisfactory. The current pupils in Year 12 and 13 show a good knowledge and understanding of role of aquifers in the water cycle and can explain the conditions present during different weather systems. They make good progress when taking into account their prior levels attained at GCSE. Standards at A level have been below the national figures over the last three years, but students have performed better in geography than in their other subjects in the school. The percentage of pupils obtaining A-B grades in 1999 was 19.1 per cent which is well below the national figure of 34.8 per cent. The average points scored per candidate has risen from 3.5 in 1997 to 4.44 in 1999 at a time of operating the policy of open enrolment in the subject.
149. Geography is a popular option choice at GCSE with very large numbers of pupils taking the subject each year. They enjoy the subject and work hard. The standard of behaviour in geography lessons is good. The pupils work well together and show respect for their teachers. Pupils talk about their work with confidence. Pupils engage well in their work and complete an appropriate amount in the time available. This is due to the clarity with which the teachers explain the tasks and the good variety of activities they provide. Examination groups know their grades and expected targets and what they need to do to improve.
150. The quality of teaching in geography is good and has a positive impact on the progress pupils make. In the lessons seen, the quality of the teaching was good with some very good features. All teachers know their subject well and make good use of their personal knowledge to interest the pupils. An example of this is a teacher using effectively in lessons their first-hand experience of Kenya from visiting the schools. The aims for each lesson and purposes of the tasks are explained well to the pupils. In examination classes at Key Stage 4 and sixth form, tasks are related well to the requirements of the syllabus and advice is given about how to reach the required standard. In a very good example, the key ideas and tasks were shared on the board and were referred to throughout the lesson and used to summarise what had been achieved at the end. Teachers know their pupils well and marking and feedback support pupils' learning. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods, for example, video material, oral questioning and well structured enquiries. Their explanations are clear and informative and practical activities are well matched to the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the location and physical geography of the places they are studying. For example, pupils worked in pairs to find the key features and location of areas in Kenya. Homework is set consistently and is used well to consolidate the pupils' learning.
151. The quality of the subject management is good. The department works well as a team. The head of department supports the professional development of his colleagues well. There is good liaison with the middle schools to ensure continuity in the curriculum. Fieldwork is well organised and well managed to enable pupils to produce a good range of course work. The curriculum is enriched by Key Stage 4 and sixth form study visits both in the United Kingdom and to the linked school in Kenya. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of the pupils. The department is committed to striving for continual improvement and this is reflected in the rising trend of results at GCSE over the last

three years. There is a strong sense of purpose in lessons with clear aims set and a consistency of provision and expectations across the department.

HISTORY

152. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are above national expectations in lessons and well above national averages in the teacher assessment results reported for the past two years. Pupils are gaining a good grounding in knowledge and understanding of the topics they cover in their history lessons. Many of them are confident and adept in handling and investigating historical sources to answer questions about history. They use key terms and dates appropriately in discussion and written work. Many pupils produce good quality pieces of extended writing which reflect their range and depth of knowledge and understanding of the historical context, together with their growing confidence in expressing themselves fluently in writing, for example, in their letters home from the trenches of World War I.
153. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are at least close to national expectations or better than this amongst a significant number of pupils. The GCSE results for the past three years have shown a significant increase in the percentage of pupils gaining a higher grade (A* and A grades) and results are well above national averages. Clearly, the good standards noted in the last inspection report have been improved further and high standards are consistently being achieved. Again, pupils are gaining a thorough grounding in knowledge and understanding of their history topics in preparation for their GCSE examination. The historical skills which enable them to investigate, analyse and synthesise evidence are developing well. This and the ability to write fluently and coherently stands them in good stead for the completion of their course work enquiries. Many pupils are articulate in expressing their findings and ideas.
154. Sixth form students attain slightly higher than national standards overall in their examination results. Since the last inspection, there has been a steady improvement in the overall pass rate and the trend in respect of higher grades (A and B grades) is rising. This is sometimes not reflected in lessons because there are too few opportunities for them to think for themselves, reflecting on what they have learned and applying this knowledge and understanding to new work. Nevertheless, written work indicates that most students are gaining a good range and depth of knowledge and understanding. The students own notes are usually detailed and well structured and essays reflect a growing awareness of the importance of the combination of narrative and analysis. The completion of a personal study allows students to exercise their initiative and independence in their investigation of a historical problem.
155. Lessons in history contribute well to the development of literacy skills, notably in planning opportunities for extended writing and in the use and understanding of key words. The use of information technology is being developed within the programme of work and students are making increased use of the Internet for their research of history topics. Many pupils make use of word-processing in completion of their homework. Though there are opportunities for students to develop their numeracy skills, for example, in analysis of statistical data, this aspect is not yet being systematically planned. This is also true of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development where, though the programme of work provides ample opportunities to explore these areas, they are not exploited fully.
156. The major strength in the department is the teaching and this has been maintained, at least since the last inspection. All of the teaching is at least satisfactory and usually good or very good with some outstanding features. This department is successful and achieves high standards for its students because a number of these

features are consistently evident in the majority of lessons. These are the setting of high expectations for pupils' work and behaviour, being clear about the learning objectives of the lesson and explaining these to pupils and the careful planning of well structured lessons incorporating a range of teaching and learning activities which provide interest and challenge so that students can learn productively and make good progress. All teachers have very secure knowledge of the subject, usually present lessons with energy and enthusiasm and engage pupils' interest and challenge them intellectually. In marking, the majority of teachers give good, detailed feedback to pupils on what is good about their work and how it can be improved. The provision for students with special educational needs would be better matched to their needs if teachers were aware of the targets in their individual education plans.

157. There are no significant weaknesses in the teaching though some sixth form lessons lack real challenge and some do not provide a wide range of teaching and learning activities.
158. Pupils have good attitudes to their learning. The majority are conscientious and work hard both in lessons and with homework. In lessons they are interested and attentive and sustain good levels of concentration. Many of them respond impressively to the challenges posed by the teacher, for example, in a Year 9 class where students were researching the reasons why young men volunteered in the early years of World War I, and a Year 10 class where they were examining the worsening relations between the American government and the native Americans in the American West in the nineteenth century. Pupils work productively in discussion with their peers or independently and make good progress. They behave well in lessons, generally listen well and respect one another's views and have good relationships with one another and their teachers.
159. The department is well led. The head of department sets the standard for the strong teaching team, gives clear educational direction and promotes the good learning ethos to which the team subscribe. The clear commitment to high standards are exemplified by its clear focus on teaching and learning expressed in the department's development plan. There is regular evaluation of teaching and learning, including observation of lessons by the Head of Department and the sampling of pupils' work by the teaching team. In this and through regular productive meetings, the work of the department is kept under review. Data which gives details of pupils' prior attainment is used constructively to predict GCSE grades and place pupils in teaching groups. It is not yet being used to set individual targets for pupils. Strong links with the middle schools have been maintained to ensure that pupils' transfer into Year 9 goes smoothly. Further collaborative work is planned to provide a programme of work which will support students' progress more systematically as they move through Key Stage 3.
160. Since the last inspection, the good standards have been further improved by the strong leadership and committed and effective teaching team. The history department is well placed to become even more successful with attention to the issues outlined above.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

161. Teacher assessments indicate that standards at Key Stage 3 are well above average. This is an improvement in standards since the previous inspection. No pupils are entered for a GCSE course in information technology. Standards in the sixth form are close to the national course expectations, for those students completing key skills or information technology courses.

162. Inspection evidence found similar high standards at Key Stage 3. In Year 9, higher-attaining pupils in mathematics are able to devise, insert and drag formulae in a 'Rich Aunt Investigation'. In design and technology, average ability pupils use a circuit building programme to produce a working drawing using a graphics package effectively. All pupils use word-processing skills with confidence.
163. The use of information technology is used effectively as a 'tool' to improve standards in English through offering pupils a clear sense of the audience to whom they are writing and the purpose for their word-processed written work at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Three talented Year 11 pupils are designing the Year 11 site on the school's 'home page' on the Internet. They use complex computer programming codes to develop all aspects of the web site, geared to the interests of their peers. This exceptional performance is predominantly self-taught, but effectively encouraged and supported, by the information technology coordinator. Pupils with special educational needs use computers to word-process and then to draft and redraft their work to improve their literacy skills. Nevertheless, overall standards at Key Stage 4 remain at the same level as those achieved at Key Stage 3. Additionally, standards relating to the application and effects of information technology are relatively weaker at both key stages and control is only taught to pupils studying GCSE electronics.
164. Students in the sixth form work well independently on computers and use PowerPoint and other software appropriately to support GNVQ assignment requirements. These students set up spreadsheets to show their understanding of, for example, the cashflow of a business, and frequently use the Internet effectively to research information from a range of sources to support their learning. Overall, the standards of information skills are variable across the sixth form, dependent upon the subjects students study and their access to a computer at home.
165. The quality of teaching and learning is mainly satisfactory and at times good at both key stages and in the sixth form. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, too much time was given for a relatively simple task, which meant that the progress pupils made was insufficient. Information technology is taught through subjects. In one Year 9 food technology lesson, the teacher gave a clear demonstration of how to input data and what to record on a worksheet using Excel which effectively enabled pupils to log on quickly and get on with their work independently. Most pupils concentrated fully on the task and consolidated their word-processing skills in writing up a report on the efficiency and value for money of food appliances. Some pupils were creative in the presentation of their report using a range of styles and fonts. To extend their understanding effectively, an appropriate research task, requiring the use of the Internet, was set for homework and those pupils without Internet facilities at home could utilise the school facilities out of lesson time. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher skilfully guided pupils through difficulties, to enable them to use a spreadsheet to calculate business costs. In the sixth form, students show their increased confidence with a range of software, for example, the use of PowerPoint for a business presentation, because of the open access they have to computers throughout the day.
166. Pupils are keen to use computers in lessons, at lunchtime and at home and this significantly contributes to the standards they achieve. They work with confidence and readily help one another when experiencing any difficulty. Pupils and students

have very positive attitudes towards their work on computers and get on with tasks with interest and sustained concentration. They respect their computer equipment and rarely cause breakage. They behave well in lessons and during the lunchtimes, when they can use the computers to extend their learning or for pleasure.

167. The information technology coordinator works hard to ensure a quality provision across the school. Opportunities to use information technology are suitably planned within subjects. Pupils know what they have to do to achieve higher levels in assessed tasks but are unclear what they need to do to improve. Insufficient cross-referencing of teaching takes place to ensure that pupils' experiences are progressive, for example, that the work on Excel in one subject builds on the level of expertise shown in another. Additionally, there are no adequate procedures in place across subjects to verify the teacher assessment judgements at Key Stage 3. The school does not meet the full statutory requirements to teach information technology to all pupils at Key Stage 4 as its provision is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that pupils receive their National Curriculum entitlement.
168. The school has in place a systematic programme to improve the skill base of subject teachers for information technology. Appropriate plans are in place for training using the New Opportunities Fund to improve teacher competence and confidence. The coordinator has a good grasp of the whole-school issues required for information technology to be taught as a 'tool' for learning across the school. Nevertheless, the management arrangements for monitoring the quality of learning and its assessment are insufficiently rigorous for the school to be confident that full National Curriculum requirements are met and that the provision is of an assured consistent quality.
169. Since the previous inspection, there have been substantial improvements in hardware and software facilities, although the ratio of computers to pupils remains average. An assessment system has been introduced but now requires further development to promote additional rigour to ensure full coverage of information technology requirements. Most of the strengths identified in the last inspection remain, and the school is therefore well placed to sustain and implement successfully further improvement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

170. Standards in French and German have improved since the last inspection, but there is still much work to do. A*-C grades in GCSE French have increased to reach 47 per cent in 1999. Progress in German has been much slower, and is yet to be reflected in examination results which have not improved and remain well below average. Classroom observation indicates that recent measures, for example, the provision of new text books and review of the scheme of work, are having an impact in German, particularly on the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and learning, which is much reduced. The target of 51 per cent A* - C grades set for French in 2000 is challenging and achievable. The German target of 30 per cent A* - C grades reflects the recent chequered history of the subject and is still much too low. Standards in the sixth form in both languages are now high.
171. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils' attainment in French is slightly above average. In German, it was slightly below average in the lessons seen, reflecting recent improvement on the standards of last year's GCSE results. In both languages, pupils' standards in listening, reading and, to some extent, writing are higher than in

speaking. Pupils have a good recall of vocabulary and structure of the language because of systematic teaching over time from well chosen course books and good use of homework. This solid background combines with good dictionary skills to enable them to complete listening and reading exercises successfully.

172. Two issues from the previous inspection have not been satisfactorily tackled. These are the introduction of a programme of extended reading for pleasure, and the provision of many more opportunities to write for different reasons and purposes. Currently some pupils, especially average and lower-attainers are not motivated by activities of which they do not see a clear purpose. Higher-attainers sometimes lack the range of language in writing which is stimulated by extended reading. They already write convincing accounts with some complex language and a high degree of accuracy, but lack a wide range of expression. Writing is currently dominated too greatly by examination practice and exercises from the course book.
173. Speaking is a weakness in both French and German. Pupils often fail to pronounce words and sentences accurately, and their ability to communicate is relatively weak. This is because lesson plans do not always identify what the language learned will be used for. Some teachers do not insist on high standards of pronunciation or on full answers. They introduce too much content and fail to give pupils enough practise of it. As a result, pupils rely too heavily on the written text in their books when speaking, and their fluency and accuracy suffer. In addition, opportunities for pupils to use the foreign language for routine classroom exchanges are often missed because these parts of the lesson are conducted in English.
174. Average and lower-attaining pupils are particularly penalised by the failure to limit carefully the amount of language introduced and used in speaking. They need to learn to do a little well, but at present tend to do a lot relatively poorly and therefore lack confidence. Pupils behave well, on the whole, in the lessons observed. Nevertheless, there was a lack of real enthusiasm and motivation, particularly amongst average and lower-attaining pupils, and in some lessons their disaffection threatened to spill over into disruption. Sometimes this was because work was not pitched at the right level for them. Other reasons are the failure to identify a purpose for the lesson which pupils would find relevant and interesting, and the related issue of lesson activities which move at too slow a pace, are often dull, predictable and excessively focused on examination practice. In some lessons, particularly in German, boys respond noticeably less well than girls to this type of revision, which may explain why they have tended to under-perform in recent examinations in German.
175. There is also good and very good teaching, particularly in the sixth form. Teachers have high expectations, use the foreign language consistently and insist that pupils do the same. Subject matter is challenging and interesting and, as a result pupils are highly motivated and well organised learners. They are keen to contribute in lessons, and show good levels of comprehension in both listening and reading. The standards of the current sixth form pupils are high. They communicate well in speaking and writing because of a good grasp of grammar and structure and a wide-ranging and relevant vocabulary. They handle abstract thought and complex ideas with some confidence. The marking of work is systematic and contains helpful comment to move learning forward, contrasting sharply with the situation at Key Stages 3 and 4, where pupils are rarely given indications of how to improve.
176. A further strength is in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs in the study centre. These pupils show an unusually good level of recall of previously learned material and a confidence to use it developed by skilful and timely use of well conceived support materials. In the Year 10 German lesson observed, the use of a lively and relevant video recording produced a very high level of interest and

enthusiasm, as well as introducing the often difficult concept of formality and informality within a motivating and relevant context.

177. Pupils with special educational needs taught in mainstream classes make satisfactory progress, and are sometimes well supported by learning assistants. A good example of this is the support of a deaf pupil, who, through good concerted work between the teacher and the support assistant will take part in the listening and speaking parts of the GCSE examination. The department manages to ensure that the vast majority of pupils is entered for the full GCSE, and may be able to improve mainstream provision still further by increasing links with the study centre.
178. The improvements since the last inspection are the result of purposeful leadership and changes in staffing responsibilities in the department which have improved the overall quality of teaching. A key element was the introduction of a common system of end-of-unit assessment in French which has ensured that all teachers cover the syllabus at an even rate. Good policies and schemes of work in French provide clear guidance. The development of German is behind schedule, but is beginning to catch up with the introduction of new course books this year.
179. The key issues for the department to tackle are the continued differences in the quality of teaching between classes and the interest and variety of the teaching programme at Key Stages 3 and 4. A first priority will be to re-introduce the evaluation of teaching and learning to ensure that all teachers follow stated policies and teach with sufficient pace and variety. A second will be to alter the programme of study to give pupils access to a wider range of activities, including information technology, and to provide more opportunities to use language for a purpose.

MUSIC

180. There are high standards in music throughout the school as a result of good organisation and very good teaching.
181. Most Year 9 pupils are producing work which meets national expectations and the higher-attaining musicians do even better. Pupils have a good understanding of musical terms and structures, and build on what they learned in their previous schools to compose and to perform in small groups to produce good quality compositions. As part of a study of African music, some groups created five or six different rhythm patterns matching the form of African music and blended them successfully with careful thought to the musical structure of the piece as a whole. They described their work using correct musical terms and made thoughtful evaluations about the success of their compositions.
182. Pupils following GCSE courses show good listening skills. They recognise musical features and structures and identify where they occur in examples that are played to them.
183. Students of music in the sixth form compose and perform to a high standard. Students discussing their own compositions involve themselves in intellectual debate about musical forms and styles and relate their own work to composers they have studied. Their expertise in performance enriches the cultural life of the school, for instance in a series of high quality lunchtime recitals.

184. These high standards lead to good examination results. Eighty-seven per cent of candidates entered for GCSE in 1999 gained A* - C grades, significantly above the national average, and this has been the case for several years. Students taking A level achieve high grades, and often do even better than predicted.
185. The standards achieved are as a direct result of consistently good teaching. Teachers know their subject well, and use their own expertise to plan interesting work for the pupils which gradually builds up their knowledge, skills and understanding of music. Excellent procedures have been developed to ensure that the work planned builds properly on what pupils have learned in their previous schools.
186. Teachers form good relationships with the pupils they teach and work flexibly, adding their own ideas to pupils' creative contributions. Pupils are given a clear idea of how their work is assessed, and are helped to take part in making their own judgements. In examination courses, work is structured to be challenging and relate closely to syllabus requirements.
187. Pupils respond well to their teachers' efforts. Behaviour is good. Year 9 classes showed enthusiasm and an eagerness to be involved. They were excited by the practical work. At Key Stage 4, pupils appreciate the opportunity to further their personal interests in music and enjoy good humoured exchanges with their teachers. Sixth form students take a committed approach to their studies and regard themselves as "musicians in the community".
188. Accommodation and resources are good and well used, further supporting the positive attitude of the pupils.
189. The department has built effectively on the positive outcomes of its previous inspection report, improving the approach to assessment and developing its contact with contributory schools. Although there is more use of information technology for composing, there is still a need to develop Key Stage 3 provision. The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and instrumental teaching has been maintained and makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

190. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment exceeds national expectations and by the end of Key Stage 4 it is close to national expectations. High standards are also evident in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils gaining A* - C passes at GCSE in physical education is very high when compared with the national average. However, the examination is taken in Year 12, after one year of study, rather than in Year 11 following two years of study, which is more usual.
191. Good standards are achieved by higher-attaining pupils in badminton and netball at Key Stage 3 and in hockey, netball and volleyball at Key Stage 4. Very high standards are evident in hockey in the sixth form and in extra-curricular basketball and football. However, pupils of all abilities work hard and apply themselves well. At both key stages they show good knowledge and understanding when responding to challenging questions from their teachers. They also work hard to improve their skills and apply them successfully in games.

192. Improvement in the subject since it was last inspected is satisfactory. Significant improvement has occurred in the way pupils apply their skills in games and show their understanding of tactics.
193. The quality of teaching and learning at both key stages is good and in the sixth form it is very good. Pupils behave well and show good attitudes in the subject. The very good relationships between teachers and their pupils are a significant strength and ensure the majority of pupils are well motivated. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and they make good progress.
194. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and good knowledge of their subject. This enables them to identify and share helpful points for development and to plan activities which challenge and extend their pupils appropriately. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and over time. However, the structure of the timetable does not always allow sufficient time to be allocated to some activities for pupils to progress as far as might otherwise be possible.
195. Sometimes teachers do not check with sufficient thoroughness that pupils are performing warm-up exercises correctly. They always tell pupils what they will be doing during the course of the lesson. However, they do not always explain what it is that pupils are expected to learn from such activities. They also provide pupils with accurate information about how well they have done in lessons. Often this is not extended to asking pupils to explain how well they think they have done and what they will need to do to improve further.
196. Arrangements to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in the subject are not adequate. This is because teachers are usually allocated non-contact periods at the same time. However, this arrangement does have the advantage of providing opportunities for teachers to meet and plan together, which they do effectively.
197. The school timetable provides pupils in Year 10 with only one lesson of physical education each week, whereas other year groups have two. This is unsatisfactory and disrupts progression in the subject. The timetable also restricts opportunities for sixth form pupils to participate fully in physical education when times allocated clash with the provision made for other subjects.
198. The subject is led effectively and benefits greatly from the strong mutual support which teachers provide for one another. The department also provides a wide range of well attended extra-curricular clubs and has been very successful in fixtures against other schools in basketball and football.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

199. Pupils make the progress expected of them in Year 9 so that by the end of Key Stage 3 they meet the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4, for both the full and short GCSE courses, are good in comparison with national figures. Standards at A level are close to national figures.
200. At the end of Year 9 pupils make particularly good progress in developing their ability to think and reflect on the 'big questions' in religious education, due to the challenging nature of the curriculum. For example, pupils articulate the arguments given by philosophers for God's existence. Extended assignments enable all pupils to explore more deeply the significant festivals and events in world religions to a good level of understanding.
201. The introduction of the GCSE Short Course for Religious Education for all pupils is

raising standards in Key Stage 4. In 1999, 51 per cent of pupils obtained an A* - C grade and 93 per cent gained A* - G. By the end of Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils have a good understanding of the nature of belief and apply well the views of theologians to issues, such as 'Was World War II a just war?' Pupils in the GCSE groups reach standards appropriate for their ability and the higher-attaining pupils often show mature insights into the issues addressed.

202. Standards at A level over the last three years have been in line with national figures. In 1999, all students gained a pass although none gained the highest grades. The current Year 13 make good progress in their conceptual understanding of ethical issues due to the focussed teaching on relevant topics.
203. The overall progress of pupils is good. In Year 9, the pupils concentrate well and persevere when faced with deep, philosophical issues. In Key Stage 4, many pupils make very good progress due to the inspiring teaching which presents controversial topics in an interesting and arresting way. In the sixth form, those who take A level make good progress and many choose to continue with a related subject at higher education. However, insufficient opportunity is presented for students who do not select religious education to study aspects of the subject within the general studies programme.
204. The quality of the teaching is sound overall. Of all the lessons seen, all were satisfactory and some contained very good features. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and this has a major impact on standards. Lessons are planned well and the aims for each lesson are shared with the pupils. In the best lessons, for example, in Year 11 when pupils discuss 'Was World War II a just war?', the extent to which the aims have been met are summarised at the end. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods, for example, video, paired discussion and personal reading, as well as good teacher exposition, which allows pupils of varying abilities to make progress. The quality of marking and feedback given to pupils is very good and is consistent across the department. Homework is consistently set and the tasks are meaningful and well planned.
205. At the last inspection, it was noted that insufficient time was allocated to religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Since then, the school has increased the time at Key Stage 4 and now ensures that all pupils follow the GCSE short course for religious education. There has been insufficient progress, however, in providing opportunities for all students to study aspects of religious education post-16.
206. There has been considerable improvement in the quality of the curriculum planning since the last inspection. In the last year there has been a complete review of the curriculum and development of new schemes of work, with the express aim of improving the quality of learning and increasing the thinking skills of pupils. These schemes enable all teachers of religious education to be consistent in their lesson planning and to focus on the key ideas and questions, which ensure continuity in the pupils' learning.
207. The quality of subject management is good and the head of department supports her colleagues well, encouraging professional development and developing resources. Teachers work as a team and religious education makes a major contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The quality of education represents an improvement to the standard noted in the previous report.
208. In order to improve further the quality of provision, attention should be given to meeting statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form, increasing the range of resources available and building in more systematic approaches to

evaluating teachers' work.

DRAMA

- 209. Standards in drama are satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and pupils who choose to follow the GCSE course further improve the standards of their work. In the sixth form, there are good standards of work in performing arts.
- 210. Year 9 pupils speak fluently and with expression. They are learning to adapt their speech to suit the different roles they take on in drama lessons, and are using this skill to explore ideas from other times and places, for example, to understand society's expectations of male and female roles during war time. They are beginning to understand how to use the performance space and communicate their ideas effectively to others. These improvements occur because teachers are helping pupils to evaluate their work and understand its purpose. This is important because some Year 9 pupils have limited experience of drama before attending this school.
- 211. Pupils following GCSE courses develop characters well. Year 11 pupils showed a good ability to structure their work into scenes which demonstrated this development. In Year 10, the ability to evaluate drama work and take action to improve it is very well developed, as a result of some excellent teaching using the assessment criteria from the examination syllabus.
- 212. Performing Arts students have developed a good understanding of the different styles and genres of presentation and make good use of the art form to create striking performance pieces, particularly where different art forms have been combined.
- 213. Examination results at GCSE have been consistently above national averages in recent years, but were disappointing in 1999, with only 57 per cent of candidates gaining A* - C grades, significantly below the national average. Students taking A level Performing Arts mostly achieve good grades.
- 214. Teachers have responded to the drop in attainment of GCSE in 1999 by placing more emphasis on the use of assessment to help pupils improve their work, and the strategies which have been developed to achieve this are excellent. Teachers are very skilled in the use of drama teaching strategies and work creatively with pupils to help them reach a deeper understanding of their learning. Teachers expect high standards of work and behaviour and lessons are conducted at a fast pace. Their lessons are well organised and pupils can see the purpose of activities. They respond well and relationships are good, both between pupils and with their teachers. Pupils find the work exciting and are keen to be involved. Sixth form students enjoy the mature discussions with teachers in the development of presentation pieces.
- 215. There is good accommodation for drama which helps to reinforce the commitment of pupils. During the preparation for examinations, a great deal of work took place outside of normal lesson times.

MEDIA STUDIES

- 216. Standards in media studies in the 1999 A level examinations were good, with 100 per cent of students attaining pass grades. A substantial proportion of pupils attained passes at grades A - C. In lessons and in coursework, standards of attainment were satisfactory or better.

217. Pupils comment critically on media products, particularly advertising, analysing them in terms of their aesthetic and social impact. They develop increasingly sophisticated frameworks for analysis, for example, when considering the differences of representation in a number of soap operas. In lessons, pupils demonstrate a keen awareness of audience, and the impact of audience on how media products are constructed. Students offered perceptive insights, for example, identifying that propaganda might, depending on historical context and social circumstance, play a part in urban mythologies.
218. Teaching in the subject is satisfactory or better and by conveying their own enthusiasm for the subject, teachers engage the intellectual interest of students. Numbers of pupils wishing to take the subject are rising. However, students do not always use the vocabulary of media criticism in discussions, or in their coursework and teachers are not sufficiently rigorous in prompting its use. As a result, when critically analysing aspects of the media, students do not always make judgements that reflect an understanding of the inter-relationships between media products and practices, and the institutions and the agencies that create them. A well thought out programme of induction is provided for pupils, most of whom will not have studied GCSE media studies, and this enables pupils to make a good start to their A level work.

SIXTH FORM PROVISION

219. The school has a flourishing sixth form of approximately 320 students who are following GCE Advanced level and GNVQ courses. These students make progress during their courses which is at least satisfactory in relation to students nationally. The school applies its own entry requirement of five or more GCSE higher grades with some flexibility so that some students start A level courses with a D grade at GCSE in the subject. The overall A level results are slightly below the national average but above the average for Suffolk LEA. Students currently following GNVQ courses in the sixth form are achieving standards at least in line with national averages. Some students, especially in advanced and intermediate business, attain well above average standards.
220. Teaching at GCE Advanced level and GNVQ Advanced level is invariably satisfactory or better. It is often good or very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable, prepare their lessons well and make their subjects understandable to the students through detailed explanations, good use of questioning and helpful examples. However, the main features that lead to some sixth form lessons being satisfactory rather than good are a very steady, sometimes slow pace and insufficient student involvement. In GNVQ intermediate, students written work includes too much that is copied, of which they have little understanding.
221. GNVQ students receive regular guidance from their teachers who assist them effectively in managing the considerable workload associated with their course and in using their time well. Ongoing quality support and guidance effectively encourages pupils to work very hard when required. Guidance given to an underachieving sixth form student last year on how to improve his work has resulted in him now being in line to achieve a distinction in GNVQ Advanced Business. However, the lack of systematic and continuing links with companies and other organisations results in students being unable consistently to deepen their understanding of industry and commerce.
222. In GNVQ, students take a great deal of responsibility for their own learning and there are many aspects of the course that students do well. Most students are developing good information technology and communication skills. Work samples

illustrate the appropriate use of information technology for word-processing, data entry and analysis with line, bar and pie graphs being used in written presentations. All students are able to use the Internet for research purposes and many students use PowerPoint for their presentations. Evaluation skills are well developed and written work indicates a good understanding of how students can improve their own learning, for example, through including monitoring points in their action plan. Work is well presented. GNVQ students are highly self-motivated and work with sustained concentration. This positive attitude contributes significantly to high standards and high completion rates.

223. GCE A level students are conscientious, work hard at their studies and make at least satisfactory progress. They are attentive in lessons, make for themselves detailed notes and revise thoroughly for assessments. However, the high level of responsibility for their own learning and progress seen in GNVQ courses is less evident in some A level subjects where students are often passive recipients of knowledge, contributing only when asked questions. Teachers do not always encourage students to be more actively involved in lessons or impress upon them the need to extend their studies by further reading and research.
224. Students in Years 12 and 13 are well supported by their tutors and other staff with sixth form responsibilities. Individual tutorials, using well planned agendas, provide students with good opportunities to discuss their progress and achievements and to consider career and higher education options. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its use of performance data in the sixth form and has used predicted grades, based on a national database, as a basis for discussion of students' progress. The school is also aware of how students' achievements compare with those elsewhere and with national figures. This data is used well to evaluate the effectiveness of the sixth form.
225. The sixth form is managed well. It has effective operating systems and procedures that are well established and communications are good. There is an increasing use of data to evaluate performance, both of individuals and of the sixth form as a whole, and evidence of the use of this data for management purposes. The promotion of high achievement and ensuring quality of provision by monitoring and evaluation are appropriately identified as priorities in the sixth form development plan. This work is underway but, as the school recognises, there is a need to develop further the evaluation of sixth form teaching and tutorial work to ensure consistency of practice and to increase student participation to make them more active learners.