

INSPECTION REPORT

STEYNING GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Steyning

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126092

Headteacher: Peter Senior

Reporting inspector: John Powell
3174

Dates of inspection: 5 - 9 March 2001

Inspection number: 185534

Full 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:	Church of England Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Shooting Field Steyping West Sussex
Postcode:	BN44 3RX
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Terry Sexton
Date of previous inspection:	2 - 6 October 1995

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11508	Christopher Griffin	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3735	Alan Webb	Team inspector	Science	
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22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Geography	
15462	Clifford Blakemore	Team inspector	History	
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3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15849	Pauline Buzzing	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20395	Carolyn Rowe	Team inspector	Physical education	
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	Religious education Equal opportunities	
30982	Barbara Barnes	Team inspector	Special educational needs	The work of the SEN unit
27407	William Stoneham	Team inspector	Vocational education	The sixth form; community links

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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including Vocational A-levels, or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect the standards that they reach in relation to their earlier performances, and thus the **progress** that has occurred. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those with a comparable proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Despite its name, Steyning Grammar School is a split-site voluntary controlled Church of England comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18, having technology college specialist status. With 1852 pupils on roll, including 332 in the sixth form, it is much larger than usual, and has grown by 16 per cent since the last inspection; further growth is expected. In addition to the 235 pupils who join the school in Year 7, the school is unusual in having a second intake of some 130 pupils in Year 9 from an intermediate school in the area, and also in having facilities for boarding. The overall ability of pupils at entry has been broadly average, although the most recent Year 7 has above average attainments overall. The area served by the school has less disadvantage than average, although there are marked variations from ward to ward. There is a unit at the school for up to 16 pupils with special educational needs, mainly dyslexia. The school has 328 pupils (17.6 per cent) on its special needs register, of whom 34 (1.8 per cent) have a Statement of Special Educational Need; these are both average figures for a school of this size. At 1.7 per cent, the proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is a little higher than in most schools; in part this reflects the multi-national character of its boarding community. Overall, however, most pupils are of white European heritage.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Overall, the effectiveness of the school is good. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Pupils reach higher standards overall at GCSE than would be expected from their attainments at entry. This is because of the generally good quality of the teaching that they experience, resulting in them becoming mature and confident learners. Behaviour is good, as are the pupils' attitudes towards their work. The overall quality of leadership and management is good; that in some subjects is very good or excellent. The school provides good value for money, including in its large sixth form.

What the school does well

- Overall, pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the time that they leave school.
- Teaching is good in most subjects, leading to good learning and progress because of high expectations and effective teaching methods.
- The pupils show good attitudes towards work and behave well, leading to a good and productive learning ethos.
- Although a technology college, the school also values and reaches high standards in areas such as art, drama, music and religious education.
- The overall quality of management in the school is good; at subject level it can be excellent.
- The sixth form (Years 12 and 13) is a thriving and very positive part of the school community, with very good teaching.

What could be improved

- Assessment and reporting arrangements could be improved to show pupils more clearly what they need to do to improve.
- Subject teachers need more guidance and support when working with pupils with special educational needs.
- The attainments of boys, particularly lower and middle attainers at Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) and Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11), could be better in most subjects.
- The school's accommodation is poor and limits learning in many subjects, but especially so in Years 7 and 8.

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 improvement since the last inspection in 1995. Almost all of the issues identified then have been tackled successfully, although work remains to be done in assessment and reporting, and in matching teaching to the needs of all pupils. Standards overall in English, mathematics and science have risen in line with national trends; those at Key Stage 3 in English have improved considerably. Teaching quality has improved substantially. The school is on course to meet its current targets for its pupils.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	B	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A	B	C	

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

Over the past three years, the average points score obtained in the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in Year 9 has been above the national average; results were well above average in 2000. Results have improved at a similar rate to that seen nationally. The 2000 average points score in English is well above the national average, whilst those in mathematics and science are above average. In relation to similar schools, (those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), the overall points score is above average, whilst that in English is very high, in the top five per cent of schools nationally. On the same basis, science results are average, but those in mathematics are below average. Girls do better than boys in English, but they attain at similar levels in mathematics and science.

At the end of Key Stage 4 in Year 11, the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at grade C or better has been above the national average over the last three years, with girls performing better than boys. Standards at the lower level of five or more passes at grade G or above, whilst in line with the figure for all schools nationally, are below average when compared to those in similar schools. Results have risen since the last inspection at a broadly similar rate to that seen nationally. In relation to the other subjects that they took, pupils tend to do significantly better in business studies, science, design and technology, drama, English literature, French, German and geography. They tend to do less well in English language, history, mathematics and physical education. Overall, the pupils' achievements are good over the five years to GCSE; average standards on entry in Year 7 rise to above average GCSE scores by the end of Year 11.

Standards in the sixth form have been above the national average over the past three years, but subject to significant variation from year to year; they are average in 2000. In contrast to results at the end of Years 9 and 11, boys outperform both the national boys' average and that of girls; the girls at the school reach below average standards. In relation to their earlier GCSE scores, students in 2000 achieved A-level results overall that are broadly in line with expectations. In 2000, overall pass rates are significantly above average in design and technology and drama, but below average French and German; other subject results are broadly average.

In work seen during the inspection, standards are well above average in art and design at Key Stage 3, and in science, geography and religious education in the sixth form. Standards are average in mathematics, science, and art and design at Key Stage 3, at Key Stages 3 and 4 in history, and at all levels in information and communication technology and in physical education. In all other cases, standards are above average. In all subjects, pupils make at least satisfactory progress overall; in most, it is good. However, there is some underachievement amongst lower and middle attaining boys at Key Stages 3 and 4. The school's targets are suitably demanding, although they do not take sufficient account of the latest national data on performance in subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; almost all pupils are very positive about their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, both in lessons and around the school. Unsatisfactory behaviour is rare, and usually linked to weaker teaching
Personal development and relationships	Good; the good relationships in the school have a positive effect on standards and achievement
Attendance	Good, in spite of the difficulties of a large catchment area.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons; it is very good or better in 18 per cent of them, but less than satisfactory in four per cent. Teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 in English. In mathematics and science, teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Teaching in other subjects is almost always at least good. Particular strengths are the teachers' knowledge and understanding, their expectations of work and behaviour and the range of methods used. More use could be made of assessment information, although this is very good in geography and religious education. Whilst the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, clearer guidance on what should be done is required. Learning is good overall; pupils work hard and acquire very good knowledge and understanding. Overall, teaching meets the needs of the pupils, although improvements are possible in matching work more closely to needs in some lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall but very good in the sixth form. All statutory requirements are met. Timetabling and accommodation problems sometimes have adverse effects on learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. It is good for pupils with the greatest difficulties, but more could be done for other pupils on the special needs register.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The pupils concerned are able to work effectively.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Opportunities could be better planned, but provision is good for spiritual, moral and social development. Cultural development is satisfactory, but more could be done to promote multicultural issues. Assembly arrangements do not meet statutory requirements.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. Good in terms of promoting the welfare and safety of pupils and positive behaviour. Although the monitoring of academic progress is satisfactory, assessment arrangements could be improved.

The school enjoys a satisfactory partnership with its parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher has shown good leadership since the last inspection, and most subjects have good leadership and management. The management of information and communication technology is satisfactory overall, but the arrangements lead to a split between authority and responsibility.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are active in planning and reviewing the work of the school, and apart from collective worship, fulfil their statutory duties.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. It is good in terms of the monitoring of the work of departments, but more could be done to evaluate the progress being made by the pupils using national data.
The strategic use of resources	Good overall. Development planning now helps the school to match resources to needs. The principle of best value is applied appropriately. Routine financial management is very effective.

The provision of staffing and learning resources is satisfactory, but accommodation is poor and has adverse effects on learning in many subjects, especially in Years 7 and 8.

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's high expectations The progress that pupils make The good teaching provided The school's approachability when parents wish to discuss problems The fact that most pupils enjoy coming to school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which parents feel involved in the school's work The school's homework arrangements The quality of information that parents receive about their child's progress Extra-curricular activities

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views of the school. Homework arrangements are judged to be good, although inspectors agree that published homework timetables are not always followed. Inspectors view the partnership with parents to be satisfactory overall, but agree that reports could be improved. Inspectors judge extra-curricular activities to be good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils enter the school, they take standardised tests. These show that up to 1999, attainments at entry have been average, with no significant differences between boys and girls. The 2000 entry into Year 7 shows a significantly above average picture, confirmed by the pupils' Key Stage 2 scores, which have been collected for the first time. Key Stage 2 results for the 2000 entry are well above average in mathematics, and above average in English and science. The mathematics department has been planning for this rise in entry standards.

2. Standards at Key Stage 3 have risen since the last inspection. In the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3, standards from the overall results in 2000 are well above the national average, and above that for schools with similar levels of free school meals. This represents good achievement for pupils whose attainments were, at entry, broadly average. English results are well above the national average and high - in the top five per cent nationally - in relation to similar schools. The results in mathematics and science are above the national average, but whereas science results are in line with the average for similar schools, those in mathematics are below average. In part, this reflects recent staffing difficulties within the subject. The overall results over the past three years are well above average, increasing in line with the national trend, and show girls to be reaching higher standards than boys. This is because of their strong performance in English; in mathematics and science, boys and girls show broadly similar standards in relation to national patterns.

3. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards have also risen since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five subjects at GCSE grade C or better has been above average over the last three years, including 2000. These results are average in relation to those in similar schools, and represent satisfactory achievement in relation to the pupils' Key Stage 3 test scores in 1998. Since the last inspection, the trend of improvement in the average points obtained has been broadly similar to that seen nationally, although there was a dip in 1998, followed by faster than average growth. At the lower level of five or more subjects at grade G or better, results in 2000 are similar to the national average, but below average for similar schools and in relation to that for the pupils' earlier Key Stage 3 test scores. Girls have outperformed boys over the past three years. Relative underachievement focused on middle and lower attaining boys in 2000. The proportion of pupils gaining grade C or better is significantly above the national average in art and design, science, design and technology, drama, English literature, French, German and mathematics. They are significantly below average in history. In all other subjects, including English language, results are broadly average. When the pattern of individual pupils' GCSE results is analysed, they tend to do significantly better in business studies, science, design and technology, drama, English literature, French, German and geography than in the other subjects that they take. In contrast, they tend to do significantly less well in English language, history, mathematics and physical education. The school's results fell slightly short of its targets in 2000. In part this is because there is insufficient use of available data to set targets for individual pupils in all subjects, and thus in aggregate to set appropriate school targets.

4. At the end of their sixth form courses, the average points gained per student has been above the national average over the past three years, although in 2000, the results were average. In part, this reflects the school's relatively open access policy for entry to the sixth form, leading to variability in entry quality from year to year. Students following GNVQ courses obtained above average results. Overall, students tend to gain results in A-levels and Advanced GNVQ that are in line with their earlier GCSE scores, and so achieve satisfactorily. However, this masks the fact that those with higher GCSEs tend to do better than expected from national value added studies, whereas those with lower GCSEs tend to do less well than students of a similar standard nationally. Experience from the inspection suggests that this may reflect, in part, the poorer attendance records of lower attainers. In 2000, the proportions of students gaining the highest grades A or B are significantly above average in drama and religious education, with an above average overall pass rate also in design and technology. Results are significantly below average at the higher level in English literature, French and German, and in terms of overall pass rates in French and German. In other subjects, standards are broadly average.

5. In work seen during the inspection, standards overall are above average at all levels. Achievements in relation to prior attainments are good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and satisfactory in the sixth form. Standards in English are above average at Key Stage 3, and at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in English literature. Standards are average at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form for English language. Achievement at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form is good, but only average at Key Stage 4, mainly because of under-achievement by middle and lower attaining boys. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in English thanks to effective support work. Standards of literacy are above average. Most pupils read fluently and with sufficient independence to cope with the demands of the curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils show they can extract relevant information from a range of texts, and coursework at Key Stage 4 shows that most pupils can evaluate in detail the texts they study. Standards of writing are above average. As they progress through the school, pupils make especially good progress in the organisation and paragraphing of their writing. Most pupils spell accurately and punctuate well, but the work of some middle attaining pupils contains more errors than it should. The school does not yet have a policy to promote literacy across all subjects of the curriculum, so there are variations in what is being done from subject to subject.

6. Standards seen in mathematics are average at the end of Key Stage 3, and above average at the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Standards have been adversely affected in the recent past by staffing problems, particularly at Key Stage 3, where some classes have had several teachers. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily at Key Stages 3 and 4; achievement in the sixth form is good. However, achievement has been adversely affected for some classes by the instability of staffing. The lack of a whole school policy to promote numeracy across the curriculum means that whilst mathematics teachers are developing numeracy well, drawing on the national Numeracy Strategy, practice elsewhere is more varied. Key skills work in the sixth form is generally sound.

7. Work in science shows average standards and satisfactory achievement at Key Stage 3, with above average standards at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory; it is good in the sixth form. Standards and achievement are adversely affected by inadequate and outdated laboratory accommodation, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Although pupils are enthusiastic in investigational work, there are too few well-equipped laboratories to provide sufficient opportunities for them.

8. Information and communication technology standards in work seen are average at all levels, with pupils making satisfactory achievement; the gains made by sixth formers from their previous work are good. The subject is delivered mainly through work in other departments. Some, such as design and technology, produce work of good quality. The lack of sufficient specialist teaching time in the subject is restricting achievement at Key Stage 3, whilst sometimes, limited access to suitable computer equipment restricts the progress that can be made in other subjects, particularly from Key Stage 4 onwards. Achievement is also limited by weaknesses in monitoring and assessment in the subject.

9. In other subjects, standards in work seen at Key Stage 3 are above average in religious education, music, modern languages and design and technology, and average in all other subjects. Achievements are at least satisfactory, although the low time allocated to art and unsuitable timetabling limits the progress that pupils are able to make. The need to move pupils between sites for games and swimming in Years 7 and 8 is also a barrier to their progress in lessons. In modern languages, achievement is better in Year 9 than in Years 7 and 8 because the time allocated to the study of the first language rises when pupils move to the upper school.

10. Standards in the work seen and achievement in other subjects at Key Stage 4 are above average, but generally slightly higher than at Key Stage 3, in part because of access to better accommodation and facilities. Standards are well above average in art because of skilful teaching and high expectations of what pupils should achieve. Standards are above average in design and technology, geography, modern languages, music and religious education, with good achievement again resulting from effective teaching. Standards are average in work seen in physical education and history; in both cases, achievement, although satisfactory, is sometimes restricted by accommodation problems.

11. Work seen in the sixth form shows standards to be well above average in geography and religious education. Once again, inspiring teaching lies at the heart of the good achievement seen in these subjects. Standards and achievements are above average in art and design, design and technology, and in history. Standards in modern languages are average, in part because the school works with a wider range of pupils' abilities following sixth form courses than is usually the case. Average standards and satisfactory achievement also occur in physical education.

12. Gifted and talented pupils show good achievement overall, although some teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging work for them in mixed ability groups. Pupils with special educational needs show satisfactory achievement overall. Those who have the most significant learning difficulties, including those with a Statement of Special Educational Need, make good progress in their lessons and over time. They achieved well at GCSE in 1999 and 2000. This is largely because they receive a high level of small group or individual specialist teaching, and additional support in lessons. However, the much larger group of pupils with less severe learning difficulties make only satisfactory progress. This is because there is relatively little in-class support for them, and because not all teachers ensure that work is sufficiently well matched to their needs. The lack of suitably clear targets and guidance in individual education plans contributes to this. Pupils who have English as an additional language at home make appropriate progress; they are confident users of English in the classroom.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. As at the last inspection, the attitudes of pupils towards school are good overall; they are very good in the sixth form, where no lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory, as was also the case in Year 8. In lessons, pupils show very positive attitudes and behaviour, with 96 per cent rated at least satisfactory, 72 per cent good or better, and 35 per cent very good or excellent. These are high figures. The very few cases of unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour are mostly in Years 9 and 10. There is a sharp improvement in overall quality from Year 11 onwards, with most lessons being marked by mature work by pupils who respond well to their teachers. The very best responses from pupils are associated with teaching that is very good or excellent; in contrast, weaker lessons tend to reflect unsatisfactory teaching or temporary staff, who do not know the pupils. Pupils show a good enthusiasm for school, and most are keen to take a full part in lessons. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, the very positive attitude of pupils who showed lots of interest in the background history of a poem contributed to their readiness to think out loud and to answer questions. They were very supportive of each other, but challenged assumptions as well. Pupils with special educational needs display positive attitudes in small group lessons, and are integrated effectively into the life of the school, although some are withdrawn from subject lessons for specialist teaching for up to seven lessons a week. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 9 to 11 speak warmly of the help and understanding they receive in these specialist sessions.

14. The behaviour of pupils is good, particularly in lessons, and this enhances learning. Whilst a significant minority of parents felt that poor behaviour was a problem in the school, this view is not borne out by the inspection. The incidence of exclusions, both permanent and fixed term, is average. Pupils show a good understanding of the impact that their actions have on others. For example pupils clearly enjoyed many of their religious education lessons, showing excellent concentration, and perseverance. They were keen to support the success of others, and tolerant and supportive of one another. There is some unsatisfactory behaviour amongst a very small core of lower attaining boys and this becomes evident in a very small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory. The absence of oppressive behaviour, including bullying, sexism and racism is satisfactory. It is good amongst older pupils, but a few in Year 7 say that they have been bullied by others in Year 8. They do not regard this as a serious issue; those pupils affected feel that the school handles problems very effectively.

15. The personal development and relationships of pupils are good. The pupils' respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others is good and this makes an effective contribution to the very good relationships evident in the school, both between pupils and with adults. This has a good impact on learning, since views can be put forward with little fear of ridicule. There are very good anti-racist displays in the religious education rooms. When given the opportunity, pupils show good initiative and personal responsibility. The girls in the boarding house are very mature in their relationships with visiting adults, and in taking responsibility for their own learning. However, boy boarders have relatively few opportunities

to demonstrate responsibility, and even older ones have their evening movements significantly restricted by the need for regular signing-in.

16. Attendance has remained good since the last inspection. Attendance is average; unauthorised absence is below average. However, in spite of the school's efforts, there remains a significant minority of parents that takes pupils away for holidays in term time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Then, teaching was satisfactory or better in some 80 per cent of lessons; the figure now is 96 per cent. In 64 per cent of lessons, teaching is good or better, whilst it is very good or excellent in 18 per cent of cases. Teaching is good overall in Key Stages 3 and 4, but with slightly more unsatisfactory lessons in Years 7 to 9. Sixth form teaching is very good, with no unsatisfactory lessons. The overall quality of teaching in religious education is very good; sixth form teaching in the subject is excellent. Teaching in history and physical education is satisfactory overall. In all other subjects, including English, mathematics and science, the overall quality of teaching is good. The pattern of learning matches that of the teaching, with the best taking place from Year 11 onwards, thanks to the maturity of the pupils and the high expectations that their teachers have of them.

18. Most lessons are characterised by a good pace of learning by pupils who are interested in what they are doing. A Year 8 dance lesson brought together all the elements that combine to produce very effective learning. The teacher had good class control so that the tone for the session was established immediately. At the start of the lesson, clear learning objectives were shared in a lively manner with the class, so that pupils knew exactly what was expected of them. The lesson plan took account of special needs requirements. High expectations of performance and the accurate use of technical vocabulary extended the pupils' understanding of choreography, tested throughout by penetrating questions. All of this combined to produce an excellent pace of learning, driven by clear timescales for activities, and rounded off with an excellent recapitulation. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, had achieved a great deal by the end of the session.

19. The specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good on balance, leading to effective learning. Where there are pupils in a class for whom English is an additional language, their learning is at least satisfactory. With specialist groups, the teachers use a step by step multi-sensory approach, including computer programmes, and place a strong emphasis on phonics, consolidation, and for some, on coping strategies. This good methodology effectively addresses the needs of pupils, most of whom have considerable difficulties with literacy. The common strength in all lessons by learning support teachers is the good relationship between staff and pupils, together with continual assessment and encouragement. Elsewhere in the school, subject teachers know who the pupils with special educational needs are and they are conversant with the general nature of pupils' learning difficulties. However there is not enough information on individual educational plans to help them to plan effectively. There is still considerable inconsistency between, and sometimes within, departments. For example, there is planned provision for matching work to pupils' needs in geography but not in history. Some teachers, as in English, make well-judged constructive comments in exercise books, while others use methods or comments that show a lack of understanding about the impact of specific learning difficulties on the pupils' ability to undertake some tasks.

20. Overall, teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects that they teach. Only in mathematics are there problems, mostly at Key Stage 3, and caused by the school having difficulty in recruiting sufficient specialist teachers. As a result, too many mathematics classes are taught by temporary or non-specialist staff, with an adverse effect on attitudes to the subject, and on standards. The situation is made worse by some classes being timetabled to have more than one teacher during the week, and the above average turnover of teachers in the subject in recent years. More typically, however, good subject knowledge leads to the effective acquisition by pupils of new concepts and skills, as in a Year 9 geography lesson on rainforests. Here, the teacher's detailed knowledge of the subject was seen to good effect in excellent quality rapid fire question and answer work, which challenged pupils of all abilities, and led to them being totally involved in the work which followed.

21. Most teachers demonstrate good teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and following recent training, are becoming more competent in using information and communication technology. The school has made good progress in developing key skills work in the sixth form, as was seen to good effect in a Year 12 GNVQ travel and tourism group. Here, students were required to use the Internet to obtain data about Canada, then to carry out appropriate quantitative analyses, and finally to prepare written evaluations of what they had found.

22. Lesson planning is good overall, but is very good in the sixth form, as it is in art and music at all levels. An excellent Year 7 art lesson had pupils judging work in a session that was the culmination of a well planned series of lessons. The potential restrictions imposed by the accommodation were overcome successfully through the use of group work and the effective deployment of a studio set-up with a digital camera. As a result, the session generated great enthusiasm, high levels of productivity and a critical understanding of learning amongst the pupils. However, some teachers, more commonly in the more mixed ability groups in Years 7 and 8, do not always plan sufficiently well for pupils at both ends of the ability range.

23. The overall quality of teachers' expectations, of both work and behaviour, is good. The control of almost all classes is also good, leading to a calm working environment. On the rare occasions when control is less effective, it usually centres around allowing pupils to chatter too much. The calm working atmosphere in most classrooms, together with demanding work, means that pupils apply themselves well to learning. In science, music and religious education, expectations and challenge are very good; this leads to good achievement, and helps to develop the pupils to question their own understanding of concepts. A good example was seen in a Year 13 science lesson on human reproduction, where a rapid summary of earlier work demanded accurate use of biological terms and probed understanding very well. The teacher's focus on the scientific content led to good progress being made in a potentially embarrassing area of the course for some students.

24. The effectiveness of the methods used in lessons, including appropriate use of time and resources, is good overall, but is very good in religious education. This is an improvement on the last inspection, where methods were found to rely too much on the teacher in many subjects. The use of a wide range of approaches maintains the pupils' interest in their work. A sixth form religious education lesson looked at the impact of scientific theories of the universe on religious beliefs. High quality discussion was underpinned by core notes produced by the teacher, containing a wide range of tasks to reinforce the students' knowledge and understanding. Group work and discussion were backed by an effective use of questioning to steer the lesson forward when the pace began to slow. As a result, all students participated, challenging each other's arguments and persevering with the extremely demanding materials provided. The use of homework is generally good, with only isolated unsatisfactory examples of pupils being asked to finish classwork.

25. The impact of assessment, including marking, on learning is broadly satisfactory overall, but there are significant variations between subjects, as was the case at the last inspection. However, marking now uses a single system across the school. Overall, pupils have a generally good awareness of their own learning, although this does not always relate to National Curriculum criteria. Assessment is strongest in geography and religious education. Assessment is unsatisfactory overall in mathematics, information and communication technology, and in physical education. At its best, as in English or art, marking shows clearly what pupils must do to improve their work. whereas in mathematics, little guidance is provided. Most teachers use a range of methods of assessment, although again, there are variations in the rigour with which these are carried out. A significant weakness across the school is that teachers are not making sufficient use of the wide range of national value added data now available. Geography provides a notable exception. Overall, however, such data are not used sufficiently for diagnostic and target setting purposes in order to ensure that all pupils achieve appropriately high standards.

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

26. The previous inspection report concluded that the curriculum was satisfactory overall, but with some weaknesses. This remains true. The quality and range of learning opportunities, and the breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum, are satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 and 4; they are very good in the sixth form. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught, and statutory requirements are met. Taught time in the school is below the recommended minimum overall, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school has sought to extend the school day, but has encountered difficulty in rescheduling school transport.

27. At Key Stage 3, the time allocated to mathematics, music and art in Key Stage 3 is tight, but plans are in place to rectify this problem for the next academic year. The provision of two languages for most pupils from Year 7 onwards results in generous time being allocated for the subject by national standards. Though the Key Stage 4 curriculum is sound overall, there are only limited opportunities for the pupils to take a second language, in spite of the substantial investment of time in providing two languages for pupils at Key Stage 3. The lack of vocational provisions, for example in art, and the absence of an alternative accreditation for lower attaining pupils in some subjects such as science, are weaknesses. The school is aware of the narrowness of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, compared to that in other schools. However, parents have proved to be resistant to non-GCSE courses being offered. The sixth form provides a very good range of courses, and the school has made a very good start in planning for the new AS, A2 and vocational courses, including work in key skills.

28. For the most part, the curriculum meets the needs of the majority of pupils satisfactorily. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 10 mathematics have the opportunity to attend master-classes, whilst gifted and talented musicians are well served by the provision of good quality instrumental teaching and a range of performance opportunities that the school organises. However, challenging tasks are not consistently planned for higher attaining pupils in all subjects.

29. There is satisfactory provision overall for pupils with special educational needs. It is good for pupils with the most significant learning difficulties, including those with Statements of Special Educational Need. These pupils receive a high level of individual and small group teaching from a team of specialist learning support teachers, and there is in addition, generous provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties from an experienced specialist in that field. The generally good provision for those with significant learning difficulties does not extend sufficiently to those who have less severe special educational needs. Whilst the provision is satisfactory, and the amount of specialist teaching and support by withdrawal from subject lessons is higher than usual, the amount of additional support in lessons is low compared with most schools; much of it is limited to Years 10 and 11.

30. Timetabling contributes to some problems. The previous report criticised the impact on learning in classes that were taught by more than one teacher in a subject; this is still the case. It has a significant negative impact on standards in mathematics in view of other staffing difficulties in the subject. In English, more than a quarter of classes is shared between teachers, and there is particular pressure on the Year 11 classes, where five out of the 14 classes are shared. The continuity of the pupils' learning is disrupted as a result at this crucial time in their learning. There is further discontinuity and adverse impact on standards in the timetabling in art and music in Years 8 and 9, which sees pupils taught for several weeks in one or other subject in rotation.

31. The split site nature of the school, and poor accommodation, causes further problems for the curriculum, and it means that learning does not take place in the best context for the pupils to achieve well. For example, nearly half of the lessons in history are in rooms other than the specialist rooms, and some science lessons are not taught in laboratories. The limitations of the accommodation further constrain the timetable through the grouping arrangements of pupils in the lower school. Subjects are blocked together, and the pupils cannot be moved from one set to another in a single subject; they have to achieve well in all subjects in the block before they can be moved. This causes frustration among some of the younger pupils, who want to improve their performance, but become discouraged when they work hard in a subject to improve their standards, but cannot be moved to a higher set.

32. Schemes of work to guide teaching are sound overall. There are examples of good planning in the curriculum, for example in English, geography and music. Subject departments are taking on board the latest advice. For example, the mathematics department has planned well for the rising standards of

pupils now coming from primary schools. However, in history, schemes have not yet been customised to meet the needs of the particular pupils in the school, and are not specific enough in defining the time scales within which the Programmes of Study should take place. The provision in modern foreign languages has developed in response to the previous inspection report, so that Latin is now provided for both higher and lower attainers. Many of the latter have special educational needs, but the system is working satisfactorily, and makes a sound contribution to the pupils' linguistic skills.

33. The school's strategies for literacy and numeracy are at an early stage of development, but are satisfactory overall, even though whole-school policies have yet to be produced. The head of English has recently taken on the role of literacy co-ordinator and a thoughtful paper has raised awareness of the main issues. There are some examples of good practice; in Years 7 and 8, schemes devised by the librarian and the English department are promoting library use and reading. Literacy lessons using methods from the National Literacy Strategy have been introduced in Year 7. The school does not yet have a whole school approach to numeracy, although a start has been made within mathematics, with teachers drawing upon the guidance contained in the National Numeracy Strategy.

34. Overall, the curriculum provides satisfactorily for equality of opportunity in that all options are open to all pupils, although, in practice, the limited time available to art and music in Key Stage 3 limits what talented pupils in these subjects are able to achieve. Further, the limited provision for more vocational options at Key Stage 4 means that some pupils cannot achieve as well as they might; GCSE is not always appropriate. Provisions for pupils who have English as an additional language are satisfactory overall.

35. The school's provision for personal and social education is satisfactory overall. A review of the school's provisions after the last inspection revealed dissatisfaction amongst the pupils with their Key Stage 3 course, and the system has been revised so that it is now taught by a small team of teachers. All the required elements are taught, and the pupils now see the programme as valuable and interesting. Careers education is good, and there is good quality advice on higher education in the sixth form. Work experience projects are taken seriously, although the reduced work experience programme in the sixth form is a retrograde step.

36. Extra-curricular activities are good. A good range of visits takes place as part of the curriculum, both locally and further afield, including overseas. There is a good range of clubs and teams for the pupils to join. The design and technology club, which meets at lunchtime, for example, includes challenges set by local industry. There is an after-school science club in the lower school, and a wide range of sports teams and musical activities, including a senior and junior choir, a band, and plenty of opportunities for informal music making.

37. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory overall. Pastoral links are good, so that the transition into the school is smooth. Year 7 pupils and parents spoke warmly about the good induction arrangements. Curricular links are much less well developed. They are successful for the pupils who transfer from the intermediate school system at the start of Year 9, but much less so for Year 7. There is some repetition of work they have already done in Year 6, which leads to marking time and a slowing of progress. There are weekly master classes in mathematics, science and design and technology for Year 6 pupils from each feeder primary school, but there is no systematic curriculum work with all feeder primaries to ensure that the continuity of work is maintained; this is a weakness.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

38. The school provides good opportunities for the pupils' personal development. Spiritual, moral and social provisions are good, whilst cultural provision is satisfactory overall. However, there is no clear strategy in this area, and little whole-school monitoring of these aspects of pupils' development to ensure that they are systematically threaded through all subjects of the curriculum. These important dimensions are not made explicit and reflected in all departmental planning and practice; too often, suitable opportunities are neither created nor taken. Thus, the consistency of pupils' experiences cannot be assured throughout all areas of the school's work.

39. The school does not provide an act of worship each day for every pupil and therefore does not fulfil statutory requirements. The governors give as the reason the very limited accommodation available to hold even year assemblies. However, there are regular assemblies for each year group which make a satisfactory contribution to all aspects of pupils' personal development. There is no formal planned programme of assemblies which identifies the themes to be covered during the year. Little is done to create an aesthetically inspiring occasion in routine assemblies through, for example, music or the visual arts, although better opportunities to deepen pupils' spiritual awareness and self-knowledge are provided in special events such as the Christmas carol services or presentation assemblies. The appointment of the lay chaplain and the involvement of local clergy in assemblies and other events contributes to an ethos in which the dignity and worth of each individual is safeguarded. Religious education provides a very significant planned contribution to pupils' spiritual development and teaches pupils of all ages how to value imagination, inspiration and contemplation. However, most of the opportunities in subjects arise spontaneously or as the result of individual initiatives.

40. The school makes good provision for moral development. There are clear expectations on behaviour and levels of mutual respect. The school charter is displayed throughout the school and was reviewed and modified following consultations with staff and pupils. Notions of right and wrong are challenged and developed in humanities, science and sociology, for example, and most teachers are good role models for their pupils. Assemblies and the personal social education programme are used to reinforce the school's values.

41. The school makes good provision for the pupils' social development. The programme of extra curricular activities gives good opportunities for pupils to work together in groups and teams. Although there is no prefect system, there is an active school council and all sixth form students are members of at least one committee. Pupils of all ages show good levels of maturity and responsibility which the school responds to effectively. This was shown in the way in which Year 8 pupils persuaded the school to decorate and refurbish their toilets. There is effective pupil participation in events such as the end of year services in the local church or in the annual Feast Night for boarding students. Pupils in all key stages raise large amounts of money for charity. A popular talent contest, for example, raises money for the local hospice. However, there are relatively few opportunities for boarders to take responsibility within their houses.

42. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for the pupils' cultural development. In religious education, there are effective links with the local church and with clergy representing some of the faiths studied by pupils. There are effective displays on issues such as racism or the traditions of different world religions. Students in sociology consider issues such as whether people from ethnic minority communities receive poorer health care or education than white people, and whether institutional racism exists in schools. There are regular opportunities for pupils to take part in foreign exchanges, and to visit museums and art galleries. Students in the boarding house, many of whom come from overseas, are given opportunities to celebrate occasions such as Nigerian independence day. However, although it has some strong features, the school could provide more planned opportunities to prepare pupils to live in a multicultural, multifaith society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. The school has responded satisfactorily to the points raised at the last inspection. Overall, the school's arrangements for support and guidance are satisfactory, and effective in raising standards, although the progress of individual pupils, and thus groups such as boys, could be better monitored by the use of national data on achievements. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory, although training in child protection matters for all staff has not been completed. Procedures for health and safety are satisfactory, although cramped accommodation on the lower school site sometimes limits what can be taught on safety grounds. The boarding houses have satisfactory arrangements for ensuring that there are sufficient staff to supervise the pupils; pupils know of these arrangements. Whilst boarders have access to a telephone, that in the boys' house is located on a table in a corridor, and there is no privacy for those using it. Boarders know who they can contact outside the school if they have concerns. .

44. The monitoring of the pupils' academic performance and personal development is satisfactory overall; that of personal development is good. At present, the monitoring of academic performance is hampered by the lack of clear targets for pupils based upon national data. There is very good support for the pupils with the most significant learning difficulties, both from learning support staff and from many subject teachers.

45. The procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are good, as are those for eliminating oppressive behaviour. Most pupils know and understand the positive behaviour system, which works well for nearly all of them. The system enables staff and pupils to monitor behaviour effectively, but the personal targets set are sometimes too general to be sufficiently effective. Form tutors make a good contribution to monitoring behaviour and work through the credit system.

46. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The monitoring of attendance on a daily basis is very good, with office staff acting swiftly to follow up absence by mid morning the same day. This is resulting in decreasing levels of unauthorised absence. The school has combined with local primary schools in providing parents with a common set of messages about the importance of good attendance.

47. The school's assessment arrangements are satisfactory overall. A deputy headteacher, the director of applied and flexible learning, and the three key stage managers, provide satisfactory oversight and co-ordination of the school's assessment practices and procedures. In addition, year team leaders and their associate progress co-ordinators liaise regularly to discuss pupils' performance. Good practice operates in Year 11 whereby a member of the senior management team interviews each pupil on an individual basis, and provides mentoring for those on the GCSE C/D grade borderline. Heads of department are responsible for monitoring pupils' progress in subjects and ensuring that teachers keep accurate records. Some departments are more rigorous than others in assessing pupils' work, undertaking moderation procedures and evaluating standards against national measures. The school is currently in the process of setting up a central, computerised recording system that has the potential to promote increased consistency at all levels.

48. The school has developed a comprehensive policy which underpins its assessment procedures and practices, which, whilst satisfactory overall, nevertheless include some important aspects requiring urgent development. Sound procedures include the rigorous testing arrangements in Years 7 and 9, school examinations and termly subject reviews. The recent introduction of a student progress booklet for each pupil has the potential to boost target setting procedures which, to date, are limited.

49. All subjects adhere to the school's policy that requires the use of a four-point scale for grading each pupil's behaviour, effort, attainment and routines in relation to the rest of the class or teaching group. Whilst pupils seem to understand the system, it provides insufficient reference to national benchmarks to enable them or their parents to measure progress adequately. Overall, assessment in subjects is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than it is at Key Stage 3. Islands of good practice exist which could usefully kick start unsatisfactory methods elsewhere. For example, assessment is a significant strength of the geography department. Assessment is methodical in science and is very effective in practical music making. A criticism in the last inspection was the lack of consistency in marking both within and between subjects; this persists. The most effective marking tells pupils clearly what their achievements are and what they need to do to improve. The art department leads the way in this respect.

50. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is unsatisfactory overall. This is the first year that comprehensive data on the pupils' Key Stage 2 test results have been collected, but little use has been made of them. Some successful measures are already in place, including, for example amendments to schemes of work in English when preparing pupils for the GCSE media paper, or the upgrading of the Key Stage 3 mathematics curriculum to cater for pupils' improved standards at entry. Nevertheless, the use of the school's own assessment data, and the analysis of value added factors on a systematic basis using national data, remain embryonic. Thus, the underachievement of boys has yet to be addressed satisfactorily at whole school level. In subjects, geography constitutes a beacon of

good practice that most other subjects have yet to adopt. Similarly, the promising analyses which are starting to help teachers and pupils predict and gauge progress from Key Stage 4 into the sixth form could usefully inform target setting strategies lower down the school.

51. The school has good procedures for identifying pupils who have special educational needs. All pupils take cognitive ability tests on entry and again in Year 9, backed by further diagnostic testing if required. Subject teachers have clear referral procedures, and the school attends to parental concerns promptly. Pupils' files are kept in good order and there is effective provision of skilled clerical support and the use of information technology for administrative purposes. Parents are properly informed of, and involved in, annual reviews, and good attention is given to the views of the pupils concerned. The careers service contributes appropriately to transition plans. Monitoring of pupils' progress and welfare is thorough and effective for those who receive most support, partly because learning support assistants are linked with a single learning support teacher. Target-setting and review is not sufficiently effective because targets in pupils' individual education plans are confused with strategies, or are usually too general. There is less involvement from subject teachers in review reports than is usually seen.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. Overall, the school's partnership with parents remains satisfactory. Parents view this as a good school. They are supportive and pleased with the school and agreed at the parents' meeting that, in spite of some reservations, they would readily recommend it to others. Some of the pupils say that their families moved near the school so that they could attend, and others that their parents have chosen it although it is not the nearest to their homes. Nearly all parents say that the school is approachable, has high expectations, that pupils make good progress, and that teaching is good. They also say that the pupils like the school. Inspectors agreed with these views. A number of parents felt that there were problems with homework, that reports could be better, that the range of extra-curricular activities is limited, and that they could receive better information about their child's progress. Overall, inspectors judge that the homework arrangements are satisfactory, but agree that there can be variations in the load on individual pupils from week to week. The team feels that the school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities, but that details are not always well known to parents. Inspectors agree that reports could be improved.

53. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is satisfactory. There is good guidance on induction into the school, particularly for the Year 9 intake who share a residential visit at Year 8, and parents of Year 7 pupils felt very familiar with the school when they arrived. The boarding staff maintain regular contact with parents. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall. The quality of information about the school itself is good, with regular newsletters of a high quality which are very informative, substantial and well presented. Parents are given a helpful explanatory leaflet about the school's provision if and when their child is placed on the school's special needs register. Letters sent home, especially those giving details of positive points, are a good feature of the school, and are appreciated by parents. The annual written report to parents fulfils legal requirements satisfactorily. However, the degree of information it conveys to parents is frequently disappointing. Although the report grades each pupils' behaviour, effort, attainment and routines in relation to others in the class, this system provides insufficient links to national benchmarks against which parents can judge their child's progress. The current format provides more space for pupils' self assessments than for the teacher's professional comments on individuals' attainments and progress. Inconsistencies exist both within and between departments regarding the quality and usefulness of teachers' comments. For example, some Year 7 English reports are very detailed and informative; others for Year 11 focus almost exclusively on attitudes instead of identifying subject specific strengths, weaknesses and suggesting steps for improvement. Similarly, whilst the head of physical education writes reports of excellent quality on his Year 9 pupils, this high standard is not maintained across the rest of the department. The inclusion of predicted GCSE grades on the Year 11 subject reviews is sound. However, the school's system of predictions which bands together up to three grades is too imprecise to set clear targets for pupils.

54. The contribution of parents to pupils' learning at school and at home is satisfactory. However, some parents responding to the questionnaire do not feel that the school works closely enough with them. The school is beginning to address this and it aims to involve parents in their child's learning to enable them to support progress. The head teacher is actively involved in promoting this through consultation with the

parent and staff association. Home-school agreements are used effectively, and details are provided in the pupils' planners to remind them of the terms. The Key Stage 4 director identifies pupils who need extra support and meetings with the parents are held to encourage them to support revision. A very good careers convention brings parents, teachers and pupils together every other year in an active partnership to identify pathways for the students future. A 'Skills for Adolescence' evening was received very well by parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

55. Overall, the quality of leadership and management at the school is good. At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher had only been in post for a few weeks. The last report noted that governors were seen to be remote from the school; this is no longer the case, and they are now very active in the school's work. Development planning was rudimentary; the school's status as a technology college has meant that this aspect of management is now detailed and thoroughly monitored. The monitoring of departmental effectiveness was seen to be limited; monitoring of subjects by senior managers is now regular and rigorous, but the limited time available means that middle managers are not always able to carry out sufficient monitoring of the work of their teams. Overall, however, middle managers monitor in a satisfactory manner.

56. The way in which governors fulfil their responsibilities is good. All statutory requirements are met, apart from that for the daily act of collective worship, and the way that they play a part in setting the educational priorities for development is good. Members of the governing body are attached to subject teams; some governors are more active than others in this field, reflecting their diverse outside responsibilities and work. However, the information that they receive about the school's work, or obtain for themselves, means that they have a good sense of its strengths and weaknesses. Their evaluations feed back into determining future priorities.

57. The headteacher provides good educational leadership for the school. The action plan to deal with issues raised at the last inspection was detailed, and regular monitoring of progress has meant that almost all points raised in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully. The headteacher has also successfully led the school into gaining, and retaining, technology college status. There is satisfactory reflection of the school's aims and values in its work. The limitations imposed by the buildings have prevented new technology from having the rapid impact across all subjects of the curriculum that is usually seen in such colleges. The effectiveness of the use of new technology is satisfactory overall, but with significant variations across subjects, mainly caused by access to sufficient computers. For example, the religious education team provided all documentation required for the inspection on a CD-ROM. The relatively long service of other senior staff provides stability, but sometimes makes for a more cautious approach to change. There have been improvements to the management structure since the last inspection, but the current joint arrangements for the management of information and communication technology results in a separation of responsibility and authority. At present, senior managers are not giving a sufficiently clear lead on how subjects can use performance data to evaluate their work, or to set targets for all pupils.

58. The management of subjects is, for the most part, good; none is unsatisfactory overall. The management of geography is excellent, whilst that of art and design, music and religious education is very good. What marks these subjects out is their careful monitoring of provision, particularly teaching, within the constraints of time available, and their thorough evaluation of the outcomes that individual pupils achieve. As a result, they focus on how to provide effective learning for all pupils. Even so, better use could be made of national performance data to measure the progress of pupils of different abilities against national patterns. The monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' achievements are relatively undeveloped in mathematics, information and communication technology, and in physical education. The monitoring of teaching could be improved in modern languages and physical education, although in the latter case, a new head of department is making good progress in tackling management issues. A new special educational needs co-ordinator is also starting to provide clearer strategic management of this area.

Staffing

59. At the last inspection, the deployment of staff was identified as a problem, since some teachers worked for much of the time on one or other of the school sites. The position has improved. The appraisal and professional development of staff were also seen to be areas of weakness; these have also been improved. The relatively stable staffing at more senior levels was seen to pose problems, as senior managers tended to accumulate diverse responsibilities as demands grew. A new management structure has been introduced, but since there has been little change of senior staff, radical restructuring has not been possible.

60. The number of teachers is average for a school of this size. The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good. There has been a tradition of long service to the school, but the relatively high number of changes in the last three years has resulted in a lower age profile. There has been some difficulty recently in replacing and retaining teaching staff with the required qualifications, and of the appropriate calibre, in both mathematics and modern foreign languages. However, steps have already been taken which mean that this should not be a long-term problem. Members of the governing body are fully involved in decisions about staffing levels and responsibility allowances; they attend interviews for staff appointments, and are aware of school priorities for the future.

61. Overall, subject areas are staffed with teachers who possess the required specialisms. The school has a high proportion of part-time teachers, and full-time staff who teach in more than one subject area. This inevitably has some impact on the continuity of learning, especially where classes have more than one teacher per subject during the week. There is an above average allocation of teaching staff for pupils with special educational needs, though there are fewer support assistants than normal. This results in only limited support for most pupils on the special needs register. The overall level of non-teaching staff is above average, and this helps to provide administrative support for a number of heads of department; this means they can spend a higher proportion of their time on strategic developments within their subjects. It is hoped that one of the advantages of the new timetable in September will be to allow more time for heads of department to monitor the work in their subjects; at present, this is proving difficult. The technical staff in science provide invaluable support under difficult conditions, helping to minimise the problems caused by the poor accommodation for the subject.

62. There is a very good programme of induction for all staff new to the school, which is particularly helpful to newly qualified teachers. This programme covers all the major areas of the school, so that both teachers and non-teaching staff become acquainted with procedures in this large split-site school. There are well-established and effective links with three teacher training institutions.

63. Detailed job descriptions are also well documented, so that staff are aware of their specific responsibilities. Furthermore, there is a good system of performance management, providing the opportunity for all teachers to initiate discussion about staff development needs. The introduction and effectiveness of performance management is more advanced in some subject areas than others. This results in inconsistencies across the school in the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of classroom practice.

Accommodation

64. Improvements in accommodation have been made on both sites since the last inspection. However, accommodation is still judged to be poor, as it severely constrains the standards and achievement of pupils in many subjects. In addition, the many changes of level to gain access to buildings, or to move around inside them, make the site unsuitable for pupils and adults with physical or visual impairments. Some subjects, such as history, have too many lessons taught in general classrooms, limiting access to specialist resources. The very dispersed nature of the site is inefficient, both educationally and in terms of running costs, which are well above average. The school does have examples of good accommodation. The special educational needs areas are spacious and well equipped, although pupils working in the open plan area find it hard to concentrate when others are also working there. A good theatre and drama studio enhance learning in English and drama, whilst the sixth form centre provides an attractive base for the large number of students following sixth form courses.

65. Sponsorship and extra grants have enabled extensive refurbishment within the school, for example, carpeting of corridors, good display, the upgrading of five laboratories and the development of a new upper school library. However, even this substantial investment is insufficient to enhance all areas of learning. Improvement of design and technology accommodation on the upper school site has provided good specialist facilities. However, on the lower school site, many classrooms are small for the size of groups using them, restricting learning opportunities. The practical area for food work is badly equipped and space is cramped; it is only the very good pupil behaviour that makes practical work safe. Some aspects of physical education are very good, for example, the dual provision sports centre. However, the location of facilities for swimming and games on the upper school site means that there is significant movement between the two sites; this constrains the time available for work and has an adverse impact on learning.

66. The accommodation for information and communication technology is dispersed across both sites. Because of the nature of the buildings, rooms are cramped and often poorly arranged; there is only one room that enables full class use, almost exclusively used for science. There are insufficient science laboratories for the number of teaching groups, which constrains the pupils' progress and learning in science. Staff work hard in order to keep the buildings in a suitable state of repair and decoration within budgetary constraints. Timetabling attempts to minimise the effect of the split site; teachers do their best to compensate creatively for the problems of having to work at two different locations. Despite seeking to limit the movement of both staff and pupils between the two sites, large losses of time occur in many subjects. This loss of curriculum time is significant and this constrains learning and places additional pressure on both teachers and pupils. The boarding accommodation for girls is relatively newly converted, and provides an attractive environment in which to live and work. In contrast, the boys' accommodation is less attractive and gives little privacy, given the age of most of the students who live there; very few students have single rooms. Some sleeping areas lack carpets, making them cold and uninviting. Upgrading is taking place, however, as funds permit. For example, furnishings are now of a good quality.

Learning resources

67. The overall quality of resource provision is satisfactory. Spending on resources was below average at the time of the last inspection. It has increased and for the current year is above average. This increase reflects the school's specialist technology college status. The deficiencies in provision identified in mathematics and modern foreign languages have been tackled successfully.

68. Provision for subjects is satisfactory. Provision of books and audio-visual resources is good in English and enhances the pupils' understanding of literature. Resources are also good in geography, design technology, in business education and in vocational subjects. In history, there are not enough textbooks to support homework at Key Stage 3 or for the new AS courses in Year 12.

69. The provision of computers is broadly average. Their deployment means that some areas such as English and art do not have enough access to support the development of the pupils' skills. This is especially significant in art, where pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are not having enough chance to prepare for an industry that is technologically intensive. Nor are there sufficient computers to support the work of pupils with special educational needs.

70. The library accommodation on the upper school site has been upgraded and includes computers and Internet access. The number of books, both fiction and non-fiction, is broadly average. At the lower school site, the number of library books available is below average. The librarian has developed a scheme to use texts from the upper school library to compensate for this shortfall on a planned and requested basis. This is efficient use of resources. Library and English staff have introduced several schemes to promote reading. The English department's reading log is having a good effect. An accredited reading scheme in conjunction with the library is well thought through and has the potential for success.

Efficiency

71. The strategic use made of resources is good overall. The last inspection report criticised the lack of school development planning to target resources to educational priorities. Because the school is now a technology college, detailed planning, linked to expected outcomes, is now good and provides the framework within which funds are allocated to priority areas in a proper manner. Governors play an appropriate part in these discussions. However, the most pressing need, for better accommodation, is beyond the scope of annual budgetary management. Subjects also generally show good planning processes and priorities, linked closely to whole school targets. For example, the music department has a three-year plan to provide sufficient new keyboards for Key Stage 3 pupils; this is based upon a clear vision of which areas of learning are to be improved.

72. The school's budgeting systems and routine financial management are very good. Specific grants such as those for special educational needs or staff development are used appropriately. The school receives an above average income per pupil, in part because of its specialist status. The large size of the sixth form and the economies of scale this makes possible mean that it is possible to subsidise, slightly, spending lower down the school without detriment to older students. Even so, some classes in Key Stage 3 remain large, mainly because of limited accommodation. There is a clear policy of not accumulating substantial operating surpluses from year to year; money is properly spent on current needs. The effectiveness of day to day financial management is shown by the fact that the last audit report contained no recommendations for improvement; this is rare.

73. Principles of best value are applied in a generally satisfactory manner, both at whole-school and subject levels. However, the deployment of special educational needs support teachers and other assistants leans too heavily towards working with individuals or small groups rather than providing help for the many at lower levels on the school's special needs register. The deployment of information and communication technology is not yet having an equally strong impact on all subjects.

74. Overall, although the school receives more money than usual per pupil, it is effective in that pupils leave with better results than would be expected from their attainments at entry. Teaching is good overall, and not infrequently very good or excellent. For the most part, the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils; that in the sixth form is very good. The school is successful in creating a good ethos for learning in buildings that are far from ideal. Although further improvements are possible, it therefore gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. The governors and managers at the school should consider the following key points for action in drawing up future plans for the school's development. The numbers in brackets following each point refer to the relevant paragraphs of the report. Elements of items followed by an asterisk (*) are already contained in the current school development plan.

- (1) Improve assessment and lesson planning arrangements to meet the learning needs of all pupils, paying particular attention to:
 - a) making better use of national data on the educational value added by individual pupils in order to diagnose weaknesses, to set targets and to monitor the pupils' progress towards them;
 - b) making greater reference to National Curriculum standards;
 - c) improving the quality of written comments in marking, so that pupils are given clearer guidance on what they must do to improve; and
 - d) giving more detail in annual report of what pupils are doing, and how they can improve. (25, 44, 47-51, 52, 53) *
- (2) Improve arrangements for pupils with special educational needs by:
 - a) providing more specific targets and information within individual education plans to guide subject teachers;
 - b) providing more support within the classroom for a wider range of pupils on the special needs register; and
 - c) giving subject teachers greater general guidance on how they can contribute to meeting pupils' needs. (12, 19, 22, 29, 51, 61, 73, 83) *
- (3) Improve the standards being achieved by boys, particularly middle and lower attainers, at Key Stages 3 and 4. (2, 3, 5, 14, 50) *
- (4) Continue to press for substantial improvements to the school's accommodation. (7, 9, 10, 31, 43, 64 - 66, 71) *

In addition, the governors may wish to consider including the following lesser issues in their action plan:

- implementing and monitoring a policy for promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils across the curriculum; (38 - 42)
- implementing and monitoring policies for promoting the use of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum; and (5, 6, 33, 98, 112) *
- implementing and monitoring a policy to promote partnership between the school and the wider community across the curriculum. (81, 82)

OTHER FEATURES SPECIFIED FOR THE INSPECTION

THE SIXTH FORM

76. The standards achieved in 2000 by students studying A-levels and their equivalents are average. This compares to an above average picture in the previous three years. In contrast to the picture lower down the school, boys achieve results that are above average; those for girls are below average. The school has a relatively open access sixth form, and this means that results are subject to more variation than in many other schools. Drama, and religious education both recorded results for grades A and B that were significantly above average, but results at this level in English literature, French and German were below average. A number of subjects recorded 100 per cent pass rates, including art and design, business studies, design and technology, English literature, geography, physics and religious education. Such results are above average, but overall pass rates in drama and French are below average. Vocational course results are above average; completion rates are high. Nearly 70 percent of Advanced candidates gained either merit or distinction grades, an above average figure. Results in A-levels and vocational subjects represent satisfactory achievement overall for the students involved. However, analysis undertaken during the inspection showed that students with lower GCSE scores gained lower sixth form results than would be expected from national patterns. In contrast, those with good GCSE results did better than expected. The data available did not permit more detailed analysis to be carried out to determine possible causes for this unusual pattern, for example by sex or course choice.

77. In work seen during the inspection, standards are also average overall. For some subjects, such as psychology and the sciences, standards are above average. In vocational courses, standards are below average in Advanced business studies, but are average in all other options at both Intermediate and Advanced awards. In a small Year 13 Advanced business group, absence by some students is depressing standards. In other vocational areas, students frequently plan well, but their evaluative work is less convincing; students can highlight outcomes to problems and events, but are less astute in offering reasons for the outcomes. The coverage of key skills in vocational education is at least satisfactory and in some cases it is good, or even very good. The communication skills of most students are good, but their prowess in the use of information and communication technology, and in application of number, is less consistent. However, it can be very good. For example, students' psychology coursework contains evaluation of high quality. This very good work involved data analysis and some complex information and communication technology skills; the students handled these tasks with confidence.

78. Sixth form students behave very well; their attitudes towards work and school are very good. In lessons, students act with maturity and they show genuine interest in their studies. Many are emerging as confident and articulate learners, and they are good role models for younger pupils. Sixth formers, especially in Year 13, are given much scope to show responsibility. They appreciate the opportunities offered, frequently showing commendable maturity.

79. The standard of teaching is very good and makes a significant contribution to students' learning, which is also very good. Many strengths of teaching can be identified. Teachers possess very good knowledge and understanding; they have high expectations about what the students can achieve and work is usually planned well. Such good planning results in students being presented with challenging tasks, and this rigour stimulates learning. For example, Year 13 business students studied methods that firms might employ to increase their market share. They were then required to act as marketing consultants to a firm and to produce a range of alternative strategies that might be employed. Such challenges foster group work and negotiation and foster the students' literacy and analytical skills.

80. The post-16 curriculum is very good, offering a suitable range of AS and A-levels and vocational subjects at both Advanced and Intermediate awards to students with a wider range of GCSE attainments than usual at entry. In addition, there are GCSE resit classes in English language and mathematics. Many students in Year 13 gain the Community Sports Leaders Award and some 120 students act as community volunteers. A well-planned programme for personal and social education is provided and the school's provision for the delivery of key skills in Year 12 is thorough. Careers and higher education advice is good. Students are given opportunities to seek positions of responsibility, large sums of money are raised annually for charity, and students can pursue their interests in a range of sports as well as

music and drama. A feature of religious education provision is an annual conference on beliefs. This is attended by a range of speakers including representatives of faiths other than Christianity. However, the school does not make sufficient use of its business community as an educational resource.

81. The sixth form is a happy and harmonious community that offers a large number of students many good opportunities to further their talents and interests. The management of the sixth form is good, with the potential to be very good with improvements to the use of assessment data more thoroughly. The school spends slightly less on the sixth form than it receives in its funding, but in part, this reflects the economies of scale possible with such a large student population. Overall, the sixth form offers good value for money. There are attractive social and working facilities in the sixth form centre, which further enhances the status of this part of the school community. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Recent curriculum changes have been well planned and the school has been innovative in its provision of key skills.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

82. This unit, financed by the county in addition to the school's own learning support, provides for up to 16 pupils with a statement of severe specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). The term 'unit' is no longer used because the provision is now totally integrated into curriculum support for all pupils with special educational needs within the school. There are currently fourteen pupils placed and funded by the county.

83. The requirements outlined in pupils' Statements of Special Educational Need are met in full. The pupils involved receive a high level of specialist teaching, sometimes individually and usually in groups of no more than two or three. They also receive support in lessons, particularly in English, mathematics and science, mostly from learning support assistants. All pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum although some are disapplied from studying a modern foreign language and others drop either French or German as a second language in order to have more time to work on literacy skills. Pupils at Key Stage 3 follow a literacy programme on a withdrawal basis, organised on a rolling programme so that they do not miss the same subject lessons. They make good progress overall, not always making significant improvement in reading and spelling tests, but achieving well in lessons and at GCSE. Some pupils are functioning at higher levels than test scores indicate, effectively using context clues and other strategies to extract meaning from texts. This is often because of at least satisfactory, and often good, specialist teaching, which includes coping strategies as well as a structured programme of phonics and, for older pupils, support to enable pupils to complete their coursework. There is good attention to multi-sensory methods, including using computer software for spelling programmes and for word processing, and pupils are encouraged to acquire keyboard skills. However, there is an absence across subject lessons of the good practice for specific learning difficulties included in the Code of Practice, such as the use of personal dictionaries. Learning support assistants help pupils with the recording where possible, but where they are not present, dyslexic pupils are not provided with notes to annotate or highlight instead of copying off the board. Nor is there evidence of separate marking practices, or a whole school multi-sensory approach to spelling. In addition, there is only one notebook computer currently in use, which is surprising for a school with technology college status and with long established specialist special educational needs provision. The new special educational needs co-ordinator has recognised this deficiency and plans are in hand to remedy this.

84. There is a high level of care for the pupils involved from all learning support staff, including learning support assistants, and the good pupil - teacher relationships encourage pupils to do their best. Annual reviews are properly carried out and parents properly informed and involved. Pupils' individual educational plans do not have enough information to guide subject teachers' planning; nor do they contain sufficiently clear short term targets. Pupils' work and welfare are closely monitored, and there is a range of alternative accredited courses for those who need this. Pupils have open access to a spacious and well equipped teaching area in the upper school, but its open-plan nature makes it difficult for pupils to concentrate if there are different kinds of teaching going on at the same time. The new special educational needs co-ordinator has just been appointed so it is too early to form a judgement about the quality of leadership and management.

COMMUNITY LINKS

85. The school is designated as a community technology college and some aspects of its work show good and developing links with local residents and the business community. For example, a computer firm sponsors the school and a number of local companies have made donations of cash, equipment and expertise to enhance the education of the school's students and pupils. The school also involves itself in national programmes such as an initiative that involves Year 11 pupils building, and racing, an electric car at Goodwood. The school has also endeavoured to develop the use of information and communication technology resources in the community. A local library has direct computer links to the school, enabling residents to access the school and a recent initiative has been the 'Move IT' programme, whereby funding has been secured to finance a vehicle that can take computer equipment to locations such as village halls. Local residents can then receive tuition in the use of information and communication technology within their own communities rather than having to travel to a central location. In a largely rural area, this is an enterprising development.

86. Community links are fostered in other ways. The pupils and students raise considerable sums of money each year for charity, as well as undertaking community service placements. Such contacts are appreciated and praised by a range of organisations. The quality of careers education and guidance is very good. In Year 11, for example, pupils are given considerable information on the opportunities available after GCSE examinations and sixth form students appreciate the quality of advice given on university applications. Year 10 pupils benefit from a well-organised work experience programme. The police contribute to the personal and social education programme, and some departments, such as English and music, make use of travelling theatres. Though good examples of community links can be cited, such as the 'Move IT' initiative, there are few other examples of partnerships that enrich learning and develop a work-related curriculum. The local community as a curriculum resource is underused. For example, no use is made of business mentors and the recent downgrading of the Year 12 work experience programme represents a lost opportunity to work in partnership with local firms to raise expectations and aspirations. The school serves a large and varied community. Some good contacts have been established, but development has been ad hoc rather than based on any systematic analysis of need. School staff refer frequently to 'business links', but there are few examples of strong partnerships being established that develop the curriculum and extend teaching and learning. A work-related curriculum is still in its infancy and the impact on learning of the relationships that do exist is not sufficiently monitored.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	247
Number of programmed discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	69

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	15	46	32	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1520	332
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	88	0

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	314	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	30

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	138
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	78

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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	2000	186	168	354

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	133	129	124
	Girls	142	119	116
	Total	275	248	240
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (74)	70 (68)	68 (66)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	56 (33)	48 (42)	41 (31)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	98	132	122
	Girls	125	124	119
	Total	223	256	241
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (71)	74 (74)	68 (70)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (37)	49 (38)	30 (36)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	166	143	309

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	76	149	155
	Girls	99	140	142
	Total	175	289	297
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (56)	94 (96)	96 (98)
	National	47 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42 (40)
	National	38 (38)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	60	54	114

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	18.6	14.8	16.8	3.8	5.5	4.5
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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	84.8
	National	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	21
Black – other	2
Indian	7
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	10
White	1801
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	
Black – African heritage	1	
Black – other	1	
Indian	0	
Pakistani	0	
Bangladeshi	0	
Chinese	0	
White	32	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	111.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	31
Total aggregate hours worked per week	701

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	24.0
Key Stage 4	21.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	4,816,063
Total expenditure	4,801,300
Expenditure per pupil	2678
Balance brought forward from previous year	(10712)
Balance carried forward to next year	4051

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1822
Number of questionnaires returned	597

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	58	9	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	54	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	62	11	4	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	56	16	6	2
The teaching is good.	22	67	6	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	50	17	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	44	8	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	49	4	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	47	20	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	37	49	4	3	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	56	8	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	53	10	3	11

Other issues raised by parents

The comments raised by parents at their meeting with the registered inspector reflected the pattern of perceived strengths and weaknesses shown above, but also referred to the variability of teaching quality in some subjects. One hundred and twenty-six written submissions were received from parents on a variety of issues; the variability of expectations of homework was a particularly frequent cause of concern.

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

ENGLISH

87. When pupils enter the school, their standards in English are broadly average, although the current Year 7 achieved well above average standards in their Year 6 national tests. Tests taken when pupils start at the school show no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, standards are well above the national average and very high - in the top five per cent - in comparison with similar schools. These standards were the result of the well above average proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment. The gap between boys' and girls' standards was wider than in most schools despite the boys reaching well above average standards. Standards have improved by more than one whole National Curriculum level since 1996.

88. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE English language at grades A* to C is in line with the national average in 2000, as is the proportion gaining grades A* to G. The average points score is also average. However, the proportion at C or better is below average in comparison with similar schools. The pupils' national test results at the end of Year 9 two years earlier indicated that more should have passed GCSE at grade C or higher. This was because of the underachievement of a group of middle attaining boys, many of whom successfully reached grade C or higher in their autumn resit. The difference between the proportions of boys and girls reaching grade C or above was greater than in most schools. Pupils tended to do less well in English language than in most of their other subjects. Results in 2000 are broadly in line with those of 1999 and 1998. In contrast, the proportion of pupils gaining grade C or above in GCSE English literature in 2000 is well above the national average; that at grade G or above is broadly average. Pupils tended to do better in English literature than in most of their other subjects. The proportion of boys achieving C or higher is well above average for boys nationally. The results are significantly higher than in 1999.

89. The 2000 A-level English language examination results are broadly average. The proportion passing at grades A to E is also in line with the national average but the pass rate at grades A or B is below average. In English literature, the overall pass rate is average; that for grades A or B is below average.

90. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. They are not as high as in the previous year's tests because fewer boys are consistently reaching the higher levels. Standards seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average, because more middle attaining boys are now writing with the required accuracy. In the sixth form, standards in English language are broadly average; they are above average in English literature. Pupils achieve well during Key Stage 3, making good progress. At Key Stage 4, achievement is satisfactory in English language, but is good in literature, especially in developing the coherent organisation of work. In the sixth form achievement in literature is good; it is satisfactory in English language.

91. At Key Stage 3 standards of speaking and listening are well above average. Most pupils are confident and articulate speakers. Reading standards are above average. Only a few pupils are below average because of weaknesses in fluency and comprehension. Higher attaining pupils work at well above average levels, answering comprehension questions with insight and detail. Writing standards are also above average, although a few pupils find writing sustained pieces difficult, and their work includes more errors in spelling and punctuation. Higher attaining pupils write very accurately and with great clarity in a range of contexts. For example, one pupil's formal letter to parents from a school concerning arrangements for an educational visit was an excellent example of succinct, formal writing. There are more girls than boys at this higher level. Although middle attainers write with accuracy they lack the range and control of vocabulary of higher attainers and are not as consistent in their paragraphing as they should be.

92. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of work seen are above average. Pupils maintain the well above average standards of speaking and listening observed at Key Stage 3. Reading standards are well above average. Higher attaining pupils have very high standards. They apply their knowledge and understanding about texts most effectively to handle challenging assignments such as evaluating the

impact of jealousy in Othello's downfall. Writing standards are above average, although as at Key Stage 3, a few pupils' work includes too many errors of spelling, punctuation and expression. Some higher attaining pupils write technically faultless assignments, and middle attaining pupils organise their work very well. Coherent paragraphing is a strong feature of most pupils' work throughout Key Stage 4.

93. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in English, and some are on course to achieve very high grades in their GCSE examinations. During Key Stage 4, a few pupils take the Certificate of Achievement course instead of GCSE. Because of good teacher support, they can reach GCSE standard in coursework, but are not able to do so quickly and independently in timed examinations.

94. In the sixth form, standards seen in English literature are above average. For example, higher attaining pupils closely analysed the impact of an author's use of language when writing on the fusion of myth and reality in *'The Great Gatsby'*. In English language, standards are broadly average. Those on target to achieve high grades are assured in linking theory to the case studies that they analyse. Those not reaching these standards are less confident in their application of theory.

95. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3, but especially during Year 9. In Years 7 and 8, teaching is satisfactory, although some good teaching was seen. Teaching is good at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. The teachers' specialist knowledge is a strength of the subject, ensuring that pupils develop good knowledge of the texts they study and the ability to write well organised, coherent essays. High expectations of behaviour result in well ordered lessons. At Key Stage 4, the challenging nature of the course work titles conveys high expectations and pupils work hard to meet them. Challenge is also a principle feature of sixth form teaching. In one English language lesson the teacher consistently targeted questions to individual pupils, really putting them 'on the spot' and drawing out a deeper response as a result. Teachers use a broad range of methods to stimulate and sustain the pupils' response and maintain a good pace in most lessons. Teachers are aware of the opportunities English provides for studying issues and experiences that interest the pupils. Consequently pupils enjoy English and behave well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.

96. Marking is mainly good, but some positive comments are too bland to reinforce effectively what the pupil has done well. There is also not enough use made of National Curriculum levels and their criteria during Key Stage 3, or of GCSE criteria during Key Stage 4. Consequently, pupils are not consistently clear about their standards or about what they need to improve in the short and medium term to give themselves a better chance of fulfilling their potential. This contributes to the underachievement of middle attaining boys at Key Stage 3. Teachers set good homework consistently. Support for the lower attaining pupils is good. Although there are some examples of tasks being well matched to the needs of higher attaining pupils this practice is not as widely established as it should be during Years 7 and 8.

97. The department is well managed. The curriculum is well planned, including opportunities for the use of information and communication technology, although sometimes, these are not realised because of access difficulties to hardware. There is a higher than usual proportion of classes sharing teachers, especially in Year 11 and some pupils find this hinders their progress. Monitoring of teaching and results has long been established. A hard working and enthusiastic co-ordinator for Years 7 and 8 is providing an effective lead in developing methods from the National Literacy Strategy. This is providing an effective focus on the structure of language and also offers a range of methods that can improve the standards of middle attaining boys during Key Stage 4. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress. Key Stage 3 results have improved dramatically, as have GCSE literature results. Extended writing is more effectively addressed in Year 9. The pace of lessons is faster and high standards of behaviour have been maintained. However, GCSE English language results at C or above are still not as high as they could be.

Literacy across the curriculum

98. The school does not have a policy for developing literacy across all subjects; therefore, practices are uneven and opportunities are not being planned sufficiently well. Pupils extract information from a range of texts including those from electronic sources. In geography, teachers develop methods such as skimming and scanning to help pupils extract information more efficiently, but overall the focus on these

techniques is not as explicit as it should be. So in history and science, for example, although pupils read frequently, there is no coherent policy for the development of a range of reading techniques. There is a better focus on improving the pupils' knowledge and use of subject specific vocabulary. For example, good displays in mathematics enhance the pupils' use of vocabulary, whilst in science, teachers consistently introduce new vocabulary very carefully and correct spelling errors in scientific terms. However, overall, there is need for a more consistent approach to the development of pupils' specialist vocabulary in subjects. Support for the development of writing is also uneven. An opportunity to write a news article about the 1999 solar eclipse worked very well in a Year 7 science class; pupils approached this task with real enthusiasm. In history there is some good practice, especially in the sixth form, where essay skills are frequently analysed. In contrast, design and technology work contains very little extended writing.

Drama

99. Standards in drama are a strength of the school. In the 2000 GCSE examination the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was significantly above the national average. The proportion reaching the highest grades was more than twice the national average, and all candidates gained at least grade G. The school's A-level results are also above average. Standards in work seen are broadly average by the end of Key Stage 3; by the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, they are well above average. Pupils demonstrate high standards across a range of performance skills. They are also skilled in leading and directing the performances of other pupils, and conduct themselves with great maturity. In the sixth form, standards are above average. Evaluation skills are especially good and pupils are adept at quickly putting into practice guidance on their performance. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory in Key Stage 3 but very good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. They work with real commitment and enthusiasm. A critical factor is the lively and enthusing teaching that results in hard but enjoyable work. Teachers are particularly effective in drawing out and developing high standards of performance skills. The teaching is supported by a well planned curriculum that enhances skills progressively from Years 7 to 9, and provides a good foundation for further progress. The accommodation is good; as a result, teachers and pupils are able to develop a good ambience for performance that also enhances standards. Drama also makes a good contribution to the extra curricular life of the school through productions and performance visits.

MATHEMATICS

100. There has been an unusually high turnover of teaching staff in the mathematics department in the last three years. The school has had problems in the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers with appropriate subject knowledge and aptitude. At the time of the inspection, there was additional difficulty in finding a suitable replacement for a teacher on maternity leave. The school governors and the senior management team are doing everything possible to overcome these problems. They have already appointed two suitably qualified staff for September, so it is hoped that the problem is not long-term. The impact of these difficulties on standards is more evident in Years 7 and 8, where a higher proportion of classes has been affected.

101. Pupils' standards in mathematics on entry to the school are broadly average, with no significant difference between the attainments of boys and girls. There is a significant improvement in the present Year 7, however. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the average points scores for both boys and girls alike are above the national average, but are below those in similar schools. The trend in results in the last three years shows a gradual improvement. The results gained by the whole year group indicate satisfactory achievement when compared with their results on entry to the school.

102. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, results are above the national average in the proportions of pupils gaining grades A* to C and A* to G. Girls' results are well above the national average. These results show satisfactory achievement, the pupils gaining results in line with what would be expected from their Key Stage 3 scores in 1998. However, girls have improved at a better rate than boys. Overall, pupils tend to perform less well in mathematics than they do in most of their other subjects at this level. The trend in results in the last three years shows a gradual improvement.

103. In the sixth form, A-level results in mathematics are above average; half of those entered gained grades A or B. Results in A-level further mathematics are also above average, with all five students entered gaining grades A to C. Results at A-level have been consistently high in the last three years, with students in general achieving at or above their target grades. The take-up for mathematics courses at A-level is also consistently good. Sixth formers re-sitting GCSE improve their results considerably.

104. In work seen during the inspection, the overall standard by the end of Key Stage 3 is average, but it shows wide variations throughout the key stage. Some classes show standards that are well above average; others are well below average. For example, one Year 7 class showed below average standards because the class has had a number of different teachers, and this has affected continuity and confidence. These changes have been caused mostly by staffing difficulties, but also because timetabling problems mean that the class always has more than one teacher during the week. By contrast, pupils in a class in Year 9 have formed a good working relationship with their teacher; their work is well above the norm for pupils in Key Stage 3. Overall, achievements are satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 3 in relation to the pupils' standards at entry.

105. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' confidence still shows some variation, but standards in general are above average in all aspects of mathematics. This represents good achievement in relation to standards at the start of the key stage. In one Year 11 class, pupils were able to use the scale factors of similar figures to calculate the lengths of sides in two-dimensional figures, and also work out the impact that the scale factor has on area and volume. However, in another Year 11 group, a significant proportion of those pupils taking the foundation paper showed a serious lack of confidence in their ability to tackle even the easier questions on the practice paper they were given. A number of staffing changes has contributed to these problems, and the pupils affected are working below their potential. Pupils with special educational needs in Key Stages 3 and 4 are well integrated into classes and respond well to additional help from support assistants. The achievements of these pupils are satisfactory in both key stages.

106. The standard of work seen at A-level classes in the sixth form is above average. Overall, students' achievements are good in relation to their earlier GCSE performances. For example, in a lesson on Newton's third law of motion, students concentrated well, and were encouraged to play a full part in the lesson. A sense of 'learning together' developed, and good progress was made in their ability to tackle examination questions. Students in GCSE classes in the sixth form work quietly and make sound progress. Students in key skills groups undertake self-evaluation to identify their individual mathematical needs, before moving on to appropriate exercises to prepare them for assessment. They are able to discuss their key skills course content with confidence.

107. The development of literacy skills is encouraged by an effective display of 'words you should know' in lower school. This initiative is not continued into upper school, and an opportunity to consolidate the use and meaning of key words is missed. The department has made a positive response to the National Numeracy Strategy, and the regular practice of numeracy skills in mathematics lessons is increasing. Pupils enjoy the mental challenges involved. There has been significant progress in the integration of information and communication technology into the curriculum, but there is still some inconsistency in the use of computers, particularly in Years 7 and 8.

108. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; it is satisfactory in both aspects at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. There is some good teaching in all key stages, and some examples of very good teaching in Key Stage 4. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is sound overall. It varies immensely because of the staffing difficulties, and improves as pupils move up the school. The strengths in teaching are in the planning of work, and the full use of the time available in each lesson. In most classes, pupils are provided with interesting and challenging work, at an appropriate level. For example, lessons are broken down effectively into periods of class teaching and pupil activity. A higher attaining group in Year 10 worked particularly hard when factorising simple quadratic equations, responding well to the regular increases in difficulty in the work provided by the teacher as the lesson progressed. However, there was less challenge for a Year 8 higher attaining group in a lesson on angles, with insufficient structure to the questions; as a result, they consolidated previous work, but tasks were routine and did not stimulate thought. There is a weakness across the department in the quality and frequency of day-to-day marking, with insufficient information for pupils about how to

improve their standards. Homework is set regularly, but does not provide enough stimulus for higher attaining pupils.

109. The management of the mathematics department is broadly satisfactory. The head of department has been well supported during the recent staffing difficulties, which have proved a major distraction to the work and progress of the department. There have been some significant improvements in planning the overall work of the department. However, there are still inconsistencies in practice across the department, partly because of insufficient time being devoted to monitoring the work of teachers, such as marking, the standard of presentation of pupils' work, and the analysis of results. Teachers are receptive to suggestions about how to improve their skills. The monitoring of the achievements of individual pupils is now given more consideration, but target setting is under-developed, especially in Key Stage 3.

110. The staffing situation is poor, with too many classes being taught by teachers on temporary contracts, without appropriate qualifications, or by more than one teacher. The accommodation is unsatisfactory; some rooms on the lower school site are small, and there are insufficient rooms allocated to the department on the upper school site. Many sixth form classes have to be taught in non-specialist rooms, remote from suitable resources. The overall level of learning resources is satisfactory, although little use is made of mathematical equipment to assist learning, for example in investigations. Library provision is poor, particularly for lower attaining pupils. These shortcomings have a negative effect on standards.

111. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress. Results at the end of Key Stage 3 and at GCSE have remained above the national averages. A-level results have improved, and are now also above national figures. The overall planning of the work of the department has improved, particularly for algebra. Significant steps have been taken also to increase the integration of information and communication technology into the curriculum of all pupils. However, too much of the lower attainers' work lacks pride and finish. There is a weekly programme of extension classes, and higher attaining pupils can take their GCSE examinations early. Accommodation is still unsatisfactory; and there are still too many classes which have more than one teacher each week, which also makes continuity difficult.

Numeracy across the curriculum

112. There is no policy to develop the pupils' use of numeracy across all subjects. As a result, practice is inconsistent, and there are fewer examples seen than normal. However, the general standard of numeracy is good, with regular practice at the beginning of mathematics lessons a contributory factor. Nevertheless, there is occasionally a tendency for pupils to resort too readily to using a calculator. Even though the mathematics department has identified that pupils need more practice in undertaking basic calculations without using a calculator, use is not sufficiently discouraged. The mathematics department has begun to integrate elements of the National Numeracy Strategy into its curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs having particular difficulty with number work receive additional support in their withdrawal lessons. The inclusion of numeracy targets in their individual education plans is increasing.

113. Good examples of the application of number were seen in lessons in a range of subjects across the curriculum. For example, pupils in a Year 7 class used data to produce time lines in their history lesson, and used the dates from coins found locally to evaluate periods of commercial activity. In science lessons in Key Stage 3, pupils' folders show they record data and interpret graphs in order to draw conclusions, often using computers. In vocational courses, there is a satisfactory contribution to numeracy development, though this is stronger in the business education options than in leisure and tourism. Further use of data occurs in the A-level geography course, where students test hypotheses about environmental factors, and there is effective use of formulae in A-level physics classes. Some psychology investigations contained statistical analyses of high quality.

SCIENCE

114. Pupils enter the school with overall standards in science which match the national average, but with wide variation in the quality of their earlier scientific experiences. In national tests at the end of Key

Stage 3 in 2000, standards are above the national average; boys and girls do equally well. Standards are in line with those in similar schools. The trend in results over the past three years has been above average for boys and girls alike.

115. At the end of Key Stage 4, the GCSE results in 2000 show results above the national average for boys and girls alike; results are also above average when compared to similar schools. Boys and girls tend to get better results in science than in most of the other subjects that they take. The pupils' achievements over time are good; their GCSE results are above the levels expected from their Key Stage 3 test scores two years earlier. In the sixth form, A-level results are broadly average in all science subjects.

116. At the end of Key Stage 3, the standards of the work seen are broadly average, while that at the end of Key Stage 4 they are above average. Sixth form students are reaching standards which are also above average. Observed standards are below test results at Key Stage 3 because of the impact of inadequate accommodation in Years 7 and 8. In the sixth form, the open entry policy means that results vary from year to year. The achievements of pupils in relation to their earlier standards are satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4, and very good in the sixth form. For example, a Year 10 top set, with little previous knowledge, set up an experiment to examine the process of osmosis. Having achieved good experimental results, the pupils went on to devise a correct hypothesis for the process, explaining it correctly in terms of molecular size, without any intervention by the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs at both key stages match the achievements of their classmates in oral work and experimentation, but their written work is often very brief or incomplete unless they are supported by extra adult help. Sometimes pupils achieve unexpectedly well when, for instance, a topic seizes their imaginations. An example was a Year 8 group planning a practical investigation into how insulation affects the amount of heat lost by a house. When constructing a cardboard model for testing, they devised some innovative ways to mimic modern building techniques, for instance, double glazing and cavity wall insulation, and some of their ideas were beyond what might usually be expected.

117. Pupils' notebooks are, in general, neatly written with clear diagrams and good graphs, and the standard improves in Year 9 and throughout Key Stage 4. However, in Years 7 and 8 there are noticeable gaps where pupils have failed to complete the written record, or have omitted it completely and had then failed to follow the teacher's instructions to remedy the omissions. The skills needed to be able to plan, carry out and analyse a complete investigation of a topic begin early. By the time that pupils are approaching the GCSE examinations, they are generally confident and practised. Some of the coursework examined was very impressive in scope and detail. Sixth form students demonstrate that they have successfully made the conceptual leap from GCSE to A-level work. They are competent researchers and are confident in presenting their findings to others. The difficult art of listening, taking notes, drawing diagrams and interjecting questions all at the same time has mostly been mastered, and files seen are detailed, use a wide range of sources and contain some impressive word-processed work and diagrams. Some progress has been made towards giving pupils of all ages more opportunities to write extended passages as called for in the last inspection report; GCSE coursework now shows fluent and detailed discussion in the hypotheses and evaluations of the practical examinations. The use of information and communication technology techniques has increased, and databases, reference sources and Internet sites are frequently used. Since every pupil has access to a computer at home or at school, it was possible for instance, to set a homework to visit the Science Museum site in order to take part in an interactive eclipse simulation and record the results for classroom discussion.

118. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. The teachers' command of their specialisms, their commitment, enthusiasm, good humour and high quality relationships are all strengths of the department and result in a high level of interest and motivation. There are high expectations of behaviour and of application and pupils strive to meet these. Lessons contain a variety of challenges and move at an appropriate pace with a good proportion of practical work when in the laboratories. The result is a positive and encouraging atmosphere in which most pupils progress well. Enthusiasm for practical work is obvious, and pupils in all years co-operate well and help each other over minor difficulties as a matter of course. Pupils come to lessons therefore, expecting to enjoy their lessons as well as to gain new knowledge. The strengths and weaknesses of pupils are well known to staff, and particular interests or enthusiasms can be harnessed to enhance the lesson and shyer or less confident pupils can be encouraged to become

involved. A good variety of resources is available, and pupils benefit from the acquisition of a computer room with 30 computers within the department as well as a smaller room for sixth form use. These give access to more up-to-date data than is available from textbooks and raise interest and motivation as well as encouraging mutual help between pupils. Teachers give their time to several voluntary after-school activities, varying from the Year 7 and 8 science club to revision and extension classes up to A-level. Assessment is carried out frequently. The results, together with the pupils' own assessments of the work, are used to monitor progress and to set targets for the next module. Assessment results also provide staff with the information needed to plan revision and possible changes of strategy or teaching methods that might be needed.

119. The major barrier to raising standards further is the poor level of accommodation on both sites. Although some laboratories have been refurbished and more upgrading is imminent, most are too small for the use of large groups and are often inappropriately laid out and furnished for modern needs. There are presently too few laboratories; with larger numbers moving up the school and increasing take-up of sixth form courses, the problem is increasing annually. Crowded laboratories can present unacceptable risks for some work, and so the range of activities is constrained. Shortage of specialist accommodation also means that some lessons must be taught in general classrooms remote from resources. This practice is disliked by teachers and pupils alike because of the restrictions on what can be done. Arrangements between teachers to exchange rooms to permit a particular practical activity to be done at the appropriate moment in the unit of work merely transfers the restrictions to another class. The immediate need is for an additional three laboratories.

120. Overall the department has made good progress since the last inspection. Of the points raised in the last report, only the issue of accommodation is still outstanding, and this is beyond the team's control. Positive leadership, good teamwork and first-class technician support underpin the good teaching, and the department continues to maintain a supportive, cheerful and positive environment in which everyone can enjoy working, in spite of the poor surroundings in which they do so.

ART AND DESIGN

121. On entry to the school, standards are average. In the GCSE examination in 2000, the proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grades is well above the national average for both boys and girls. Standards were also well above average in 1999, whereas in 1998, results were just above average. There has therefore been good improvement since the last inspection, when GCSE attainments were only marginally above average. Pupils' GCSE performance in art is similar to their performance in the other subjects that they take. Whilst girls gain a higher proportion of A* to C grades than boys, the gap between them is smaller than the gap nationally, and boys' results are still well above those of boys nationally. In A-level examinations, all students gained pass grades in 2000. The proportion gaining A or B grades is above average and has shown gradual improvement over the last three years. There is no noticeable difference between the attainments of male or female students at A-level.

122. At the end of Key Stage 3, the teachers' own assessments of standards show them to be average. This is supported by the quality of work seen during the inspection. Since they enter the school with average standards in art, pupils' achievements over the course of Key Stage 3 are broadly satisfactory and they make sound progress. However, insufficient curriculum time in Years 8 and 9 and a lack of continuity in learning due to the timetabling arrangements with music limit the potential progress that pupils make. Additionally, the large mixed ability classes limit teachers' effectiveness in supporting the least and most able, who do not always achieve as well as they should. By the end of the key stage, pupils in Year 9 discuss their responses to works of art in a perceptive way, although few use the language of art with discrimination. Their practical work shows confident use of colour as they focus on the tonal, textural and surface qualities of paint. In one lesson, for instance, pupils used detailed large-scale drawings of eyes to produce vivid and imaginative semi- abstract paintings.

123. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of work seen are well above average. Pupils' achievements are very good as a result of very well organised teaching that leads to high levels of motivation and thus progress. Pupils have produced striking sculptures inspired by the work of well-known artists such as Picasso, Miro and Giacometti. In the process they learned a lot about the styles of these artists and successfully used a range of materials, such as wire, card and plaster, to produce the finished articles.

At the end of the sixth form, the standard of work seen is above average overall. The students' achievements are good and continuously improving as a result of very well focused teaching. They research historical and stylistic features of their subject matter in detail and produce bold abstract acrylic paintings that show developing confidence and originality. Throughout the school, pupils do not develop sufficient confidence in using computer applications because the department does not have enough computers in the art rooms. There is satisfactory development of pupils' literacy skills through the regular emphasis on the use of art vocabulary in Key Stage 3 and 4 and through focused attention in sixth form art lessons to communication skills.

124. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. There are regular examples of very good teaching and one Year 7 lesson was excellent. In this lesson, the teacher's enthusiasm, high expectations and excellent use of available resources and space resulted in high levels of motivation. The pupils produced very imaginative cardboard sculptures of insects and flowers, which they photographed in a makeshift classroom studio using a digital camera and various coloured lights. Generally, however, teaching is not as successful in Key Stage 3 as elsewhere because of the constraints on space and time. This means that teachers are under pressure and unable to give of their best. In a Year 8 lesson, for instance, the teacher had a large mixed ability group in a very confined space. Although the teacher was animated and engaging, the diversity of pupils' needs and cramped conditions adversely affected their learning. In an isolated unsatisfactory lesson with a Year 7 class, the teacher used technical phrases that were not properly understood by pupils and gave over effusive praise for work that was of only average quality. This sent the wrong message to pupils who were too easily satisfied with mediocre work.

125. By contrast, the working conditions and quality of teaching in the upper school are better and there is regularly very good teaching. There is sufficient time in lessons and teachers provide interesting projects that absorb pupils' intellectual and creative energies. High expectations are increasingly evident in teachers' good use of art language. In a Year 11 lesson, for instance, the teacher used phrases such as "pictorial ingredients" and "visual elements" when setting pupils tasks. This encouraged a more discriminating awareness of what was required and effectively raised pupils' aspirations. In the sixth form, a particularly good aspect of teaching is the solid emphasis on the development of strong techniques and the integration of these with detailed background research that supports both historical and practical awareness. A particularly good aspect of teaching throughout the school is the excellent quality of marking of most teachers, who give praise for good work but clearly identify what pupils should do to improve. This helps pupils to have a clear knowledge of their own learning.

126. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Teachers now encourage pupils to work in a wide range of media, although expectations of Year 7 and 8 pupils are sometimes unambitious because of the constraints of space. The lack of time for art in Key Stage 3, which was a problem at the time of the last inspection, continues to hold down standards. The management of the department is very good. There is very good monitoring of the subject; factors that hold back progress are clearly identified, and very good leadership ensures that staff and pupils feel valued and supported in their endeavours. The good management and leadership are a potent ingredient that supports rapidly improving standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

127. Standards are above average at all key stages. The teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2000 show that standards are significantly above average for the proportion achieving at least a level 5, although that reaching the higher levels is average. This represents an upward trend in line with the picture nationally over the last two years. The GCSE results in 2000 are significantly above average for the A* to C range and average for the proportion awarded at least a G grade. The results for girls are similar to this pattern, but boys' results are no more than average for both grade ranges. The highest results are in systems and control and graphical communication, while boys' results are well below average in food. Pupils overall, and particularly girls, tend to get higher grades in design and technology than their other subjects. Results have shown an upward trend in recent years. A-level examination results in 2000 are significantly above average for the A to E range, with an average proportion awarded an A or B grade. While this result is not quite as high as previous years, the trend overall is also upwards.

128. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average at all levels and the pupils' achievements are good in terms of the progress that they make over time. At Key Stage 3, pupils develop skills in the use of a variety of large and small tools, for example when manufacturing a game using wood. Their ability to carry out delicate work such as soldering is above average. Drawing skills are also well developed so that ideas and plans are recorded accurately and clearly. Pupils use computers both to enhance the quality of their work and also to demonstrate understanding of principles such as space, quantity and dimension, which enhance numeracy standards. Most pupils have an above average understanding of electrical concepts because of the focus on systems and control. Lower attaining pupils, who are often boys, and those on the early stages of the special needs register, reach lower standards. This is because there is limited classroom support for them in design and technology lessons and because the work is not sufficiently adapted to help their understanding. The basic designing and making skills, developed during Key Stage 3, prepare pupils well for subject specialisms at Key Stage 4. The standards achieved in most of these specialisms are above average and are reflected in the quality and depth of coursework. In systems and control work, higher attaining pupils are able to design and make circuits and can quickly identify and rectify errors in circuitry. They are aided in their work by the use of computer software, as are those studying graphic products and food. In food technology lessons higher attaining girls show a good understanding of dietary information and are able to critically evaluate a commercial product. The boys are able to talk about their work but find difficulty in recording it in a written format. Coursework for resistant materials shows a good depth of understanding in the written evaluation of the work while tools are used accurately and drawing skills support the design process. GNVQ manufacturing pupils are developing sound understanding of product development. Literacy levels are generally satisfactory, although lower attaining pupils do not routinely check their spellings, even when using a word processor. Year 13 students are following the old A-level course and Year 12 the new AS course. In both years, students' ideas are innovative, the production process is understood well and they are able to evaluate their modelled ideas critically. They are working like professional designers to a high standard.

129. Teaching is good at all key stages, as is learning. Unsatisfactory lessons are rare and some teaching is very good. Pupils make good progress because they respond well to the expectations of their teachers who require hard work, and demand care and attention to detail. Teachers are experts in their subjects and set tasks that challenge the higher attaining pupils. Planning and preparation is thorough, so that classes can usually proceed at a brisk pace. For example, in a Year 9 systems and control lesson pupils worked on a variety of tasks, moving on to another aspect when the equipment they needed was already in use. However, the work planned for Key Stage 4 lessons in food does not always contain enough variety and then pace is lost. Individual education plans, for those pupils on the special needs register, are not sufficiently subject specific and support for them is limited in design and technology lessons. When a learning support assistant is present, as in a Year 10 food lesson, the pupils concerned had the work explained individually and made greater progress as a result. When teaching examination courses, teachers make good use of examination board marking criteria; this is explained to the pupils who are able to see what they need to do to get higher marks. A Year 11 group was able to identify where they could put in some extra work to gain more marks. Lower down the school marking follows the school's criteria. This does not enable pupils to know exactly how well they are doing. It does not set targets for improvement nor can it be used to inform teachers planning of future work. The use made of computers motivates pupils. Year 9 pupils in a food lesson used a dietary analysis program to check the suitability of their chosen dish. The strength of teaching in the sixth form is the reciprocal discussion about the progress of the students' work. In a product design lesson the one to one critical discussion, using focussed and challenging questions, enabled students to see how to improve their work.

130. The head of the department provides a clear vision for the development of the subject within a technology college. The management of food and workshop subjects is more integrated, although there are still opportunities to work more closely and learn from each other. Results are monitored, year on year and subject by subject, but there is limited comparison with national data and the concept of value added has yet to be considered. There is sufficient, high quality technician support in all aspects of the subject. Technology college status has provided a focus that has seen the department looking outwards to link with other schools. There is, as yet, more limited true partnership with the local community. This

is needed to add an extra dimension to the work undertaken in lessons that will challenge all, but especially the higher attainers, to do even better.

131. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The standard of pupils' work has risen. The introduction of a vocational course in the workshop area has had a positive effect on the progress of those pupils studying it. Tasks are now more challenging although lower attaining pupils need more support. The good teaching still results in good progress. GCSE results are still above average and food results are improving. The use of computers is now integral to lessons and supporting learning well. However, accommodation at the lower school site for food and resistant materials remains poor. Both are cramped to the extent of being potentially dangerous and this is of particular concern in the food preparation area. It is only the good behaviour of the pupils that makes it possible for lessons to continue. The refurbishment of the other rooms in the department has created an appropriate learning environment for design and technology. The department now needs to focus on continuing to raise standards, particularly of lower attaining boys. Consideration should be given to the accreditation offered and the use of assessment data. This will help to ensure the match of work to pupils learning needs, identify support needs and develop target setting.

GEOGRAPHY

132. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in the 2000 examinations is well above the national average. Pupils' tend to obtain better GCSE results in geography than those in most other subjects. The results in GCSE examinations over the last two years show improvements, as all pupils entered gained A* to G grades. Girls gain significantly better results than boys in their GCSE examination results. In A-level examinations, the proportion of both boys and girls achieving A or B grades is well above the national average. All pupils pass the examination.

133. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average; their achievements in relation to standards at entry are satisfactory. In Year 7, pupils learn the basic skills of map work, scale and direction in relation to the area in the vicinity of the school. Pupils learn how to present work, shade and use titles, keys and label their work. At the end of Year 9, pupils show a good understanding of deforestation and start to understand different ways in which these areas under threat could be conserved; the moral issues of conservation and sustainability are developed. Pupils show good knowledge about environmental issues and preservation of endangered species of animals. They successfully make a leaflet about the rain forests, which shows world locations and explains the rain forest's canopy. High attaining pupils understand the importance of their preservation for both conservation issues and locally supporting the different Indian cultures. Numeracy successfully supports work seen. For example, pupils successfully use data to draw graphs and bar charts representing temperature and rainfall in the forest. Overall pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress in map work, use of keys, scales and observational skills. They learn the basic skills of geography and achieve well in Years 7 to 9.

134. Standards in work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are also above average, and pupils achieve at a good level in relation to their work in Key Stage 3. Pupils have a secure knowledge of primary, secondary and tertiary industries. They know that there has been a big decrease over the last 100 years in the number of people employed in primary and secondary industries and that there are more people employed in tertiary industries providing services for people. Numeracy supports pupils' work well in geography; they make use of pie charts to successfully plot the changes in percentages of people employed in primary and tertiary industries. High attaining pupils understand about the very recent development of quaternary industries, for instance, the high technology industries and the wealth that these generate. Recent coursework for GCSE is of good quality; the best is often enhanced through good use of the computer; writing has been shaded and features inserted on maps. Concepts and the linking of different aspects of geography are developing well in Years 10 and 11. Pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment as they build on the basic geographical skills learned in Years 7 to 9. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well-integrated into lessons and receive good support by teachers, classroom assistants and their peers.

135. In the sixth form, standards in work seen are above average; this represents good achievement in relation to their GCSE work. Students show a secure knowledge of coastal geomorphology. Through

their fieldwork, they show a clear understanding of the processes that take place in erosion and deposition; students understand some of the problems this causes for coastal management.

136. The quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. There are very few occasions where teaching has shortcomings. Overall, teachers show a very good knowledge of geography and apply their knowledge well, for instance, in Year 12, knowledge of testing hypotheses. This extends pupils' horizons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work. Probing and challenging questions are a very strong feature of the teaching of geography. Pupils respond well, persevering and giving responses of high quality; at times, these exceed the teacher's expectations. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 successfully learn the basic geographical skills; literacy, number and computer work support these successfully. On occasions, the range of tasks is insufficient to meet the needs of the range of abilities in a class, although most teachers are sufficiently flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs; the support that teachers give is good. Overall, pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships are good; these features underpin and are developed through good teaching and enhance learning.

137. The head of department shows excellent leadership and management. She has a very clear view of what constitutes good provision in geography. The geography department works closely as a team and its members are very supportive to one another; they are all very enthusiastic and committed to the raising of standards. There is a good curriculum, which has breadth, balance and relevance; however, elements of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are insufficiently developed. The use of information and communication technology is planned and used effectively in the curriculum, but there are insufficient computers to provide ready access. Assessment and policy documents are good; the department makes good use of statistics in order to track pupils' progress. However, better use of national statistical comparisons is needed to further enhance assessment and tracking procedures. The monitoring of teaching takes place, but there is insufficient time for this to be done in a regular and systematic manner. Improved monitoring will enable good practice to be shared.

138. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection; all the issues of the last report have been successfully addressed. There has been significant improvement in examination results, teaching and learning and both curriculum and assessment. Additional teaching strategies need to be put in place to address the issue of boys being outperformed by girls in the GCSE examinations.

HISTORY

139. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the 2000 GCSE examination is below average, with girls achieving higher standards than boys. Pupils tend to do less well in history compared to their performance in other subjects and, although the results are an improvement on those achieved in 1999, they are well below the higher standards in recent years. In the 2000 A-level examination, albeit from low entry numbers, the results are above average, with boys and girls achieving similar standards. The good results have been consistently maintained over recent years.

140. Work seen indicates that pupils' standards at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4 are average, whilst those in the sixth form are above average. The pupils' achievements in relation to their earlier work are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4, and good in the sixth form. The problems that contributed to lower results at GCSE in 2000 have been tackled. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils acquire a range of skills such as the ability to place events sequentially in time-lines and to use sources of evidence to describe and comment on events. For example, pupils in Year 9 analysed artefacts from Victorian kitchens to appreciate lifestyles, with higher attaining pupils writing well-developed answers. Pupils know about Victorian lifestyles in Steyning, and gain further knowledge of the local area when using pictures of Brighton to understand the reasons for its growth. A minority of pupils however, is weak at distinguishing and evaluating the different sources of evidence and the quality of their written work is reduced by weaknesses in grammar, particularly spelling.

141. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils increase the range and depth of knowledge of the periods of history. In studies of European issues in the inter-war years of 1919 to 1939 for example, they understand the sequence of events leading to German re-unification and assess how Hitler achieved his foreign policy aims. For a minority of pupils, understanding about the effectiveness of propaganda is

insecure and written explanations lack detail in interpretation of events. Many pupils produce good quality coursework, for example describing and analysing the role of the women's movements before 1914, using sources of evidence to good effect. Higher attaining pupils write detailed, evaluative accounts. The quality of writing of the minority of pupils however, is reduced through weakness in reasoning and poor expression. In the sixth form, students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results and standards are above average. They deal successfully with complex, contentious issues both orally and in written work. Students in Year 12, for example, prepared high quality reasoned arguments in simulating the views of personalities associated with the passing of the civil rights legislation in the USA, debating at length the moral issues of the topic. Gifted and talented students make effective use of sources of evidence to write well structured, reasoned answers, although other students give insufficient detail in evaluating issues such as why President George Bush failed to develop the Middle East peace process from 1989 to 1993.

142. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory; it is good in the sixth form. In Years 7 to 9, the planning of lessons is good, with links made to previous lessons ensuring earlier learning is consolidated. Teachers make good use of a range of resources that helps stimulate interest and provide a focus for learning. For example, Year 7 pupils made effective use of computers to progress learning about the importance of the medieval church, selecting information to understand terms such as 'crypt' and 'altar' and to place events in time. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress when given additional classroom support, but make insufficient progress in other lessons as a result of limited strategies to address their needs. Lower attaining Year 7 pupils, for example, spend too much time on peripheral drawing tasks, whilst some Year 9 pupils find common writing tasks too difficult. The marking of work is inconsistent in quality and regularity and gives insufficient attention to the promotion of the development of literacy skills. Effective progress is evident in Years 10 and 11 in the improvement many pupils make in GCSE coursework. Pupils respond well to guidance on how to structure and evaluate work and the summary evaluation by teachers enables pupils to recognise strengths and weaknesses and how to improve. Learning is good when pupils are set challenges and lessons proceed briskly. Thus Year 11 pupils made good progress in a lesson on Hitler's foreign policy when many pupils took an active part in discussion and applied themselves well in written tasks; consequently much was achieved. Occasionally progress is unsatisfactory due to difficulties in maintaining class discipline combined with poor attitudes to learning of the minority of pupils. This resulted in frequent interruption to learning, reducing progress.

143. The teachers' knowledge and understanding has a good impact on the quality of learning in the sixth form. The teachers' assessment of written assignments is detailed and helps students recognise how to improve. Teaching is less successful when a narrow range of strategies is used and students are passively engaged in the lesson.

144. The management of the subject is satisfactory, as are arrangements for monitoring the work of the team. The curriculum is enhanced through fieldwork opportunities for most year groups and extends pupils' experience beyond the classroom. Opportunities for developing studies through the use of information communication technology are identified but the range and frequency is limited by difficulties of access to computers, which reduces learning experiences. The schemes of work give insufficient information to teachers about resources available and are not fully customised to the work in the school. Pupils' National Curriculum levels are reported to parents at the end of Key Stage 3, but information is not shared with pupils and its use to monitor progress is not fully developed. The accommodation for history is unsatisfactory as many classes are taught out of specialist rooms and the prefabricated unit provides little stimulation and detracts from the learning ethos. The main room at the lower school site on the other hand, is conducive to learning and enhanced by interesting pictorial displays.

145. Since the last inspection, the improvement has been unsatisfactory. Some underachievement is still apparent in lessons, more so for lower attaining pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4, and due to staffing problems the department continues to lack cohesion.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

146. Standards in the teachers' own assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 are above average. Girls attain at higher levels than boys; this is in line with the national difference. Standards have improved significantly since the assessment in 1999. There are no national comparisons to be made at Key Stage 4, as the school does not yet enter pupils for an examination in information and communication technology. At sixth form level, the school entered 11 students for Intermediate GNVQ in information technology. Seven students passed with merit, three gained a pass and one gained partial accreditation. There are no data to make a national comparison; however, the school improved on its previous year's results.

147. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, at the end of Key Stage 4 and at the end of the sixth form. Overall, pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 achieve satisfactory results in relation to their earlier standards. Sixth form students show good achievement compared to the standards demonstrated lower down the school. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are able to make use of a good range of software tools to collect, search and sort data. Higher attaining pupils are able to use computers, for instance, to develop and test predictions in mathematics or to combine information from different sources to communicate their ideas to different audiences in English. Lower attaining pupils enter data into a spreadsheet and display a graph. Pupils can also design electronic circuits and test them using a simulation program. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils have consolidated their skills and widened their range of experiences, so that they have a good understanding of how information technology is used in everyday life. In addition to searching the Internet or logging data from experiments, many pupils use information and communication technology independently, both to present their work and as a source of information. In the sixth form, students develop more specialist skills. They design complex applications, for instance to handle company records and payrolls.

148. Specialist teaching at Key Stage 3 is usually good and is never less than satisfactory; learning is also good. Where teachers use information and communication technology to enhance learning in other subjects of the curriculum, for instance in design and technology, teaching is often good or very good. At Key Stage 4, there is no specialist teaching; as a result, learning is only satisfactory. Where information and communication technology plays an important part in other lessons the teaching is generally satisfactory. However, in systems and control work within design and technology, the teaching is good. Specialist teaching in the sixth form, at both GNVQ levels, is usually good and sometimes very good. In sixth form lessons where other subjects are being taught, and where teachers use information and communication technology to enhance learning, the quality of teaching and learning is very good: the technology is used well and makes a valuable contribution to learning. For example, in an A-level environmental science lesson, students searched the Internet for prices on the metals market, as part of a study of the use of the earth's resources. Pupils enjoy using computers to solve problems or search for information. They learn best where the teacher plans clear objectives that challenge pupils at different levels. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, the teacher had a clear idea what pupils should achieve by the end of the lesson. He communicated this well to the pupils, and provided a series of tasks which increased in difficulty, to test the pupils' ingenuity in using a spreadsheet to work out prices of holiday packages. In a similar lesson, with a Year 7 group, the teacher provided a simpler set of instructions for the lower attaining pupils, who kept up well with the group. In both cases, nearly all pupils made good progress. Quite often however, even where the teaching provides a sufficient challenge, teachers do not ensure that all pupils are working at an appropriate level. This results in particular groups of pupils struggling to keep up. Few teachers take account of pupils with special educational needs, apart from some extra help.

149. The pupils' achievements are constrained by several factors. Although the teaching is good at Key Stage 3, there is uneven coverage with only one per cent of the timetable being devoted to direct teaching of the subject, a low figure. Subject co-ordinators for information and communication technology ensure that, in the core subjects, pupils enjoy a good range of useful experiences. The leader of information and communication technology has introduced a system of tracking of these experiences. However, pupils do not achieve the standards they might because the monitoring of learning and assessment of attainment is not accurate enough. In addition, there are big discrepancies between classes and between subjects. The school has an average number of computers for its size, but there is only one room in which a full class of pupils can each have a computer. Many rooms are cramped, which limits teaching and learning. Because of the location of computers, most of which are

tied to a particular subject, some departments are not able to give the pupils the experiences they would wish. In the sixth form, new courses and schemes of work, along with the good teaching, have contributed to a good level of achievement.

150. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory, but its management and development are unsatisfactory because of the split in responsibility and authority for the subject. The newly appointed co-ordinator for information and communication technology has been unable to develop sufficient control of the subject; for example, she is not a member of the senior management team. This split between responsibility and authority is largely due to the complex and fragmented structure of delivery that has grown up in reaction to various, often conflicting, demands. Nevertheless, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Standards have improved at Key Stage 4 and are improving at Key Stage 3. Access to computers is still unsatisfactory but nearly all subjects use information and communication technology to enhance learning to some extent. This is particularly good in the core subjects and good examples are also to be seen in business studies, design and technology and geography. Assessment and reporting remain unsatisfactory. The school has used funds well to develop staff training and teaching is better. This has raised expectations and provides a sound basis for further improvement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

151. Overall standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average; they are higher in French than in German, where they are average. The teachers' own assessments in 2000 indicate well above average standards, but these are not externally moderated and are higher than evidence obtained from the pupils concerned during the inspection.

152. In GCSE in 2000 at the end of Key Stage 4, standards in both languages are well above average. They were above average for the school, and in the top third of those of all schools in West Sussex. There was a smaller difference between the performance of girls and that of boys than that found nationally. These results represent an improvement on those of 1998 and 1999. All pupils entered for GCSE gained a grade in the range A* to C. Nineteen pupils completed the Certificate of Achievement course, all with distinction. Standards seen on inspection broadly reflect these outcomes.

153. Results in A-level in the sixth form in 2000 are below average and below those of most other schools in the county, but they had been better than that in 1998 and 1999. Standards seen on inspection suggest that they are broadly average for this level, where national expectations are in any event high.

154. Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 3, but are better in French than in German. Within the key stage there are higher standards in Year 9, a larger group of pupils, than in Years 7 and 8. Speaking and listening are strengths, but writing improves in addition as pupils move into Year 9. Reading remains underdeveloped. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory at the end of Year 8, but good overall by the end of the key stage a year later. There is some underachievement in German by boys in Year 8, but this is counterbalanced by a surge in progress in Year 9, when pupils have committed themselves to their first language, which has three periods per week. For most, this is in addition to a second language, given two periods a week. Some very good achievement by high attaining pupils is seen in French in both first and second language options. Pupils with special needs make good progress in relation to the school's expectations; some reduce their modern languages commitment to one language.

155. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is good overall. There is very good achievement in some lessons; it represents very good linguistic progress to reach high standards in French and German, or in French and Latin. Measurements of progress made by pupils who have taken GCSE show that they have made better progress than expected from their Key Stage 3 test scores. However, some underachievement was seen in German, particularly amongst boys. Special needs pupils continue to make good progress, both in mainstream classes and in Certificate of Achievement groups, where there is very good planning by teachers, for example building

into the course direct experience of shopping in the Calais shopping mall. Standards in the sixth form are average, and achievement in sixth form classes leading to A-level or AS is satisfactory. There is good achievement by four students from the near continent whose first language is not English and who are boarders at the school.

156. At Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is good. Three very good lessons were seen, taught by different teachers. As a result of the good quality of teaching, pupils show good attitudes to learning foreign languages and generally behave well. Teachers have a good command of the languages they teach, which encourages pupil to develop good pronunciation. Teachers have good understanding of most pupils' needs, including special needs, and this enables them to manage their pupils well. Pupils relate well to their teachers and to one another, so that easy co-operation is possible in language learning activities which require them to work together. There is an effective scheme of work that underpins good lesson planning, resulting in good use of time. Challenge and inspiration are offered particularly through direct contact with youngsters of their own age from France or Germany. Teaching methods have improved since the previous inspection by the use of more of the foreign language in the classroom and by the provision of copies of the coursebook for pupils in Year 9 and above, with the result that pupils are more used to independent learning. Assessment of pupils' standards of work is satisfactory and used to good effect in grouping pupils in sets where work can be best matched to their earlier learning, but it needs to be further sharpened to provide appropriate targets for pupils. Teachers of modern languages were amongst the first to take advantage of new opportunities for training in the use of information and communications technology, but they are not able to use this in lessons as much as would now be seen as desirable because they have insufficient access to computers.

157. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A great deal has been achieved in a short time in the form of a wide range of policies aimed at guiding the teachers' work, for example with regard to literacy and numeracy. However, these are not as effective as would be desirable because the head of department has insufficient opportunity to monitor their implementation. During the inspection, satisfactory arrangements were made to fill three teaching posts where for various reasons there was no postholder in place.

158. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Since the 1995 inspection, the curriculum for languages has been restructured. From the point of view of the subject, it is generous, broad and balanced. It offers relevant experience of a life skill as well as good cultural development, and very good for those who actually travel abroad. Teaching has been strengthened by the development of work in the language being learned and by the provision of course books for most pupils. As noted above, progress by pupils who do not yet have them is not as good as that made by those who do. Because of these developments standards have risen.

Latin

159. Latin is a characteristic of the school, taught from Year 9 to Year 11, with in addition one student in Year 13. Two lessons were seen, one in Year 9 and one in Year 11. The school follows the Cambridge Latin Course, which has the twin objectives of enabling the pupils to understand a Latin text and to develop an understanding of the content, style and values of Roman civilisation. Both teachers of Latin are members of the English department, which enables them to link with the national literacy initiative in English. This is a positive aspect of the Year 9 work of benefit to both high and low attaining pupils, in separate classes. These include two classes with a number of pupils who have special educational needs, who opt for Latin as their second foreign language. Work at Key Stage 4 is more specialised, leading to GCSE.

160. In 2000 there were nine candidates for GCSE, of whom five gained a grade at C or above. Over the last five years more than three quarters of those entered have gained grades in the range A* to C. Standards seen are somewhat higher than in the recent past.

161. Teaching is satisfactory and has the potential to be good, because of the teachers' enthusiasm for their subject. This leads to a school visit to the Bay of Naples in alternate years, a major cultural experience for those taking part. Links are maintained with other schools and individuals interested in classics in the local area. Good use is made of limited time and resources.

MUSIC

162. The teachers' own assessments of the pupils' standards in 2000 at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. In that particular yeargroup, the boys performed better than the girls, but amongst the higher attaining pupils, more girls than boys demonstrated exceptional performance. The numbers taking music as a GCSE subject at the end of Key Stage 4 are too small to make statistical analysis reliable. Of the 16 Year 11 pupils taking the examination in 2000, 14 obtained grades A* to C; ten of these gained A*, A or B grades, and these are good results. In the GCSE group, there were only three boys, and comparisons between the sexes are not reliable, since the performance of individuals has such a huge effect on the overall percentages. No pupil took A-level music in 2000.

163. The work seen confirms that standards are above average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The pupils' achievements are good. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, where standards at the end of both key stages were average. The pupils' standards of performance are above average. Year 9 pupils perform well in pairs on their keyboards, using a Reggae style, a given chord sequence and a melody. They synchronise their playing, know how to access the major and minor chords and, with practice, the majority soon learn how to stay in time and not to rush. Higher attaining pupils add more complexities to their ensemble work; instrumentalists such as guitar players enjoy using their skills. Comparison of standards in the sixth form with national data is unreliable because of the small numbers taking A level music. However, the three students in the Year 12 group have good performance skills; they sing and play well, and use the experience they gain through their individual studies to inform their class music. One student had recently achieved a distinction in Grade VII singing, for example, and one of the set pieces was *Summer Time*. This was an advantage in the class's introduction to Gershwin's music, and added insights to the comparison of two recorded versions of the piece.

164. Standards in composition are above average at the end of both key stages. Year 11 work in the *Sounds for Silents* project, which involved composing a soundtrack for a silent Laurel and Hardy film, and writing a commentary on the composition, show imagination. The film depicts the two main characters trying to sell Christmas trees in July, and the pupils' work shows touches of humour. One soundtrack, for example, incorporated a version of the Christmas carol *Angels from the Realms of Glory*, which then slid into a blues-style section for piano, and included some musical clichés. Scores of the pieces were produced using computer programmes, such as the trio for bass clarinet, flute and piano, annotated according to key points in the film, but also taking account of the capacity and characteristics of the three instruments. Standards in listening to music are above average. From their first musical experiences in the school, the pupils listen to music in order to learn techniques that will help them in their own performance or composition. They did this during the inspection, when the Year 7 classes listened to examples of ostinati by Haydn and by James Brown. They listened equally closely to both pieces, and practised identifying the ostinato pattern in each case, before composing their own four-note pattern. Achievement through the school in listening develops steadily, so that Year 10 pupils listen intelligently to different versions of Flamenco music and make notes on them as a basis for writing a comparison.

165. Standards in appraising music are average. The absence of an agreed whole school literacy policy means that pupils do not fully use their literacy skills to further their discussion and their writing about music. Girls are more confident in handling language to discuss the music they hear, on the whole, than boys. Some attention is given to key words, and both music teachers are good role models in the way they use language to talk about music, but some pupils struggle. Attempting to describe the difference between two performances, for example, one Year 10 pupil described it as 'sounding more boomy'. The majority of pupils develop appropriate technical vocabulary: they quickly use technical terms confidently, as Year 10 pupils did when talking about Spanish Flamenco music, and referred to the '*jaleo*'. Year 8 pupils showed good knowledge of technical terms connected with opera.

166. The quality of teaching and learning in music is consistently good throughout the school, and this is an improvement over the last inspection. Both music teachers are very good practitioners: they have a thorough knowledge of their subject, and move easily from talking about classical music to jazz, or popular music, musicals, or world music. Their enthusiasm for their subject is infectious. They also have

very good practical skills, so that they can instantly demonstrate points on the keyboard or on the piano. For example, one teacher held up the keyboard and played it sideways, facing away from him, so that the pupils could see where the fingers went on the keys. This visual reinforcement of what they hear and what they see on the page, helps them to understand the tasks they undertake, so that they make good progress in lessons. Lessons are very well planned, and tasks are conceived so that the pupils can carry them out at a variety of levels, and can add their own, creative input to them. An example of this was seen when Year 8 pupils were introduced to the Grand March from *Aida*, and told they would be playing it on their keyboards next week. On hearing the piece, a pupil who learned the trumpet asked if he could bring in his trumpet to play the piece on it, and the answer was 'Yes, but you'll have to transpose it.' The pupil nodded happily. The teachers' expectations are very high: they set up interesting tasks and prepare the pupils well by introducing them to a range of styles and examples, before asking them to do their own composing and performing. Continual assessment is satisfactory; although the pupils are regularly given frequent feedback in lessons, and some are chosen to demonstrate completed tasks to show what is wanted, the plenary sessions at the ends of lessons are satisfactory, rather than good. This is because the accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. One room is very small for practical work, and is a split-level classroom. The time allocated to music is below the nationally recommended minimum, and precious time is used as the teacher moves into adjoining rooms where pupils have to move for their group work. Gathering them together at the end of an already brief time limits what is possible in reflecting on their own and others' performances.

167. The leadership of the department is very good. The department is well organised, and the peripatetic teachers are managed well. The instrumental teaching is an important part of the school's provision, and contributes effectively to the pupils' standards in performance, so that Associated Board examinations are a regular feature of the department's work. There are comprehensive end-of-module assessment sheets that allow pupils and teachers to assess progress. Music makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The discipline of practising and performing, social interaction in the choir, ensembles and the band, and the wide range of cultures addressed through the music curriculum's world music listening programme are all strong features. Frequent opportunities for performance help the pupils to develop self-confidence, and they clearly enjoy playing to an audience. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

168. In 2000, the teachers' own assessments indicate that standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are average for all pupils, with boys reaching levels significantly above the national average. At Key Stage 4, after four years of well below average results, standards in the GCSE examinations in 2000 are broadly in line with the national average for grades A* to C, with girls outperforming boys, as they did in 1999. Unusually, pupils in the school, particularly boys, tend to achieve lower results in physical education than in most other subjects that they take. In 1999 and 2000, standards at A-level are average, with no significant difference in the results of boys and girls. The pass rate for the Community Sports Leaders Award is almost 100 per cent. Boys and girls reach good standards in competitive sport and dance. Several represent the county; a few individuals compete at national level.

169. At all levels, standards in work seen are average overall. Achievement at all levels is satisfactory. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in games and gymnastics are average. In rugby, badminton and netball, pupils display an appropriate range of skills; they know the relevant rules. When devising group sequences on apparatus, the performance of boys is modest compared with girls, reflecting both their lower attainment in gymnastics when they enter the school and staff absences. Choreography and performance are above average in Year 8, for example when girls selected ideas from Bruce's *Ghost Dances* and incorporated them successfully into their own compositions. There were no dance lessons for boys during the inspection. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are average overall. In volleyball, the performance of boys matches National Curriculum expectations; they display above average skill and control in football. Girls who participate in synchronised swimming create appropriate group routines. However, written work and evaluation skills of the non swimmers are well below average. In examination classes, whilst standards are average overall, girls outperform boys. In Year 10, the achievement of middle and lower attaining boys is disappointing in mixed classes. In Year 11, timetabling arrangements for other subjects result in separate groups for boys and girls. Written work indicates girls are reaching higher standards than boys. They are articulate, observant and analytical

when preparing for final assessment on the trampoline or coaching one another in badminton. In the sixth form, standards are broadly average. In a Year 12 AS lesson, a high attaining boy made effective links to information gleaned in the business studies course. Other students are less adept at drawing upon factual knowledge to support their opinions in discussion. When analysing performance in swimming and games, students in Year 13 show a lack of anatomical knowledge.

170. The quality of teaching and learning is never less than satisfactory. It is good at Key Stage 3, and satisfactory at KS4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, most teachers are enthusiastic and inspire pupils to learn. Good subject knowledge, together with some useful demonstrations and effective questioning, helps pupils across the ability range to improve their work in games and swimming. For example, after only a few lessons, the youngest boys demonstrate commendable gains in rugby, despite their chatter. Similarly, by the end of the Key Stage, girls understand how to improve and apply their indicating skills in netball because the teacher organises progressive practices efficiently. In the most effective gymnastics lessons, pace is good throughout. Pupils respond well when teachers challenge them to plan and perform imaginatively in pairs and small groups. Dance teaching is very good. Flair, combined with high expectations, means the girls take delight in performing. Thus, all abilities, including those with Statements of Special Educational Need, make good progress in developing their motifs and improving focus. At Key Stage 4, teachers have a good grasp of national curriculum and examination course requirements. They expect pupils to take responsibility for leading warm up exercises, coaching one another and, in football, officiating. Because the organisation of the core curriculum is very effective, most pupils continue to show positive attitudes to the subject through high standards of uniform kit and good behaviour. Teachers usually provide appropriate tasks to engage non-participants; most pupils comply with instructions. However, the incessant chatter of the non-swimming girls in Year 10, who comprised a third of the class during the lesson observed, distracted their peers because the teacher allowed them to sit together. The most successful GCSE teaching is in Year 11 where boys and girls learn separately. A theory lesson with a mixed class in Year 10 was marred by boys calling out. Marking lacks rigour, hence pupils receive insufficient guidance on how to improve written work including spelling technical terms. Sound sixth form teaching promotes satisfactory standards. However, assessment criteria are insufficiently emphasised for AS communication tasks, thus some immature boys lose concentration and commitment in the listening aspects.

171. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has a clear vision for the subject and is keen to improve the poor standing the subject had in the last inspection, before he and his young team were in post. Given the task he inherited, much has been achieved in terms of curriculum development. Inadequate accommodation on the lower school site reduces efficiency in games lessons at Key Stage 3; time is lost when teachers have to escort pupils between sites, thereby constraining curriculum coverage. The subject makes a good, implicit contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, monitoring and evaluation strategies remain embryonic. Departmental, computerised records are being introduced to chart the progress of pupils in National Curriculum activities systematically and improve moderation procedures. To date, the use of assessment information to raise standards is limited.

172. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. GCSE results are broadly average. The trend for boys to outperform girls has been reversed; indications are that this will continue in 2001 and 2002. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. Work is well matched to meet the needs of pupils across the ability range. Motivation is no longer a problem in Year 9. The addition of fixed apparatus in the Church Street gymnasium is having a positive impact on standards. Boys and girls now reach comparable levels in games; girls continue to outperform boys in gymnastics. Areas yet to be fully addressed include: schemes of work, assessment and target setting, pupils' access to computers, communication about the good extra curricular programme.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

173. In lessons and in work seen, the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the expectations of the West Sussex Locally Agreed Syllabus. Standards by the end of Key Stage 4, as measured by GCSE short course examination results and by inspection evidence, are also above average. Students currently studying religious education for AS or A-level are achieving standards which are significantly above average. Although it is not possible to make significant statistical comparisons

because of the small number of students opting for the subject last year, over three-quarters of the candidates gained A or B grades in 2000. These high standards bear witness to teachers' efforts and high expectations.

174. The achievement of pupils in Key Stage 3 is good. Progress is particularly noticeable in Year 9; pupils in Years 7 and 8 achieve average standards, but by the time they leave the key stage they have made very clear gains in their knowledge and understanding and are above average. By the end of the key stage, pupils demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the key beliefs and practices of Christianity and of the other world faiths represented in Britain and can appreciate the ways in which such faiths affect daily life and practice. They use specialist vocabulary with growing confidence. Many pupils have developed high-level skills in empathy and reflection, evident, for example, in Year 9 when they considered arguments for and against the existence of God. All pupils learn about religious symbolism and move beyond the externals of religion to probe deeper questions of meaning and morality. The pupils' writing shows an appropriate range of styles used for particular purposes. Throughout the year groups, there are good and very good examples of thoughtful oral work, and of insightful and sensitive writing. Pupils with special educational needs make similar rates of progress as those of their peers.

175. The achievement of pupils in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 build effectively on existing skills and are acquiring sufficient depth of knowledge and understanding to produce a very good range of written responses. They further expand their horizons by effective probing of their own and others' beliefs and through exploring religious perspectives on issues such as abortion and euthanasia. Pupils are forming their own ideas on a wide range of ethical and religious issues and are applying their understanding to current situations. They respond well to difficult challenges such as thinking through the concepts of omnipotence or transcendence and in so doing improve their skills in discussion and debate. Higher-attaining pupils are able to reach their potential and pupils with special educational needs make similar rates of progress as those of their peers. Achievement in the sixth form is very good. Progression from GCSE to A-level is smoothly achieved. Students are beginning to effectively identify questions of meaning and purpose and move beyond the externals of religion and philosophy to probe deeper questions of faith and practice.

176. A distinctive feature of many lessons is the way in which pupils listen well to the teacher and to one another. There are often sustained periods of listening, concentrating and reflection, particularly from older pupils. They respond well to difficult challenges and are eager to learn. Teachers deal with a small minority of potentially disaffected pupils effectively. The pupils' good behaviour has a positive effect on standards. Sixth form students are articulate, purposeful and confident.

177. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall with some excellent features. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. There are many significant strengths in the teaching, which have a very positive impact on both pupils' attitudes and the quality of their learning. The high quality of the teaching means that the pupils work hard in the subject and take a keen interest in their studies. The teaching is better in Years 9, 10 and 11 than in Years 7 and 8. This is because there are some missed opportunities in lessons in Years 7 and 8 to drive pupils' learning forward with sufficient speed and rigour. There is scope to think about whether teachers' expectations are consistently high enough in all year groups within the key stage. Work given to pupils is always sufficiently challenging, but the level of challenge is greater from Year 9 upwards. A detailed analysis of the GCSE examination results, comparing them to attainment at the age of 14, suggests that pupils' progress is substantial and improving. The teachers' increasing use of a wide range of tasks matched to pupils' abilities enables similar levels of progress to be made both by pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils. Teachers show a high level of planning and preparation for lessons. Enthusiasm and humour are characteristics of all lessons and demands are sustained. Clear exposition, coupled with judicious questioning and prompting makes pupils think. Many contemporary examples, such as the cartoon characters from *The Simpsons*, are used to illustrate, motivate and challenge. Approaches to assessment are sensitive to the nature of the subject, although marking is more effective in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 because it includes more comments on what pupils have done well and where they need to direct future efforts. Teaching in the sixth form is excellent, both for students who have chosen religious education as an A-level subject and for those who participate in the Year 12 Beliefs Conference. Work given to

students is challenging, teachers' expectations are very high and departmentally produced resources are of excellent quality.

178. The leadership of the subject is very good, providing clear educational direction and supported by detailed and comprehensive documentation which makes effective use of computer technology. The shared commitment to improvement of the subject and capacity to succeed is noteworthy. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. The department has coped well with new challenges such as the introduction of the new compulsory short course GCSE. Statutory requirements to provide religious education to all pupils and students are met. Religious education makes a significant and effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The emphasis on careful reflection, and response to Christian and other world faiths, enlarges pupils' spiritual horizons. Relating beliefs to behaviour in practical ways brings matters of right and wrong to the fore. Pupils work well in groups, tolerate different value systems to their own, and expand their social horizons by participation in events such as the Farmington Prize for religious education, and by the Year 12 Beliefs Conference. Respect for other cultures and faiths is embedded in the way in which other religions are studied and by the use of displays which illustrate themes such as racism. Religious education is a strength of the school.