

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Kenton School**  
Newcastle upon Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne

Unique Reference Number: 108528  
Inspection Number: 185607  
Headteacher: Mr D Pearmain

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Reporting inspector: Mr R C Drew  
7281

Dates of inspection: 29 November to 3 December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 108528

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Drayton Road Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 3RU
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of Chair of Governors:	Councillor M Carter
Date of previous inspection:	October 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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D Singh Lay Inspector	Equal opportunities	
T Howard W Easterby V Kerr T Slack M Christian	Mathematics English Science Design and technology Information and communications technology Modern languages History Geography Art Music Physical education Religious education	Staffing
T Brett P Roberts M Gill E Forster M Pettitt A Giles J Townend		Accommodation Resources  Curriculum Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Key Stage 4 Sixth form
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Teaching is good and a significant proportion is very good.
- Leadership is very good and management is good.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school's ability to sustain further improvement is good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, as are relationships.
- Assessment arrangements are good.
- The range and quality of extracurricular activities are very good.
- There is good breadth to the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good breadth in the sixth form.
- Provision for the social and moral development of pupils is good and there is strong pastoral provision, with good procedures for supporting pupils.
- Good links have been established with parents and the wider community.
- The school provides well-qualified staff who teach to their strengths.
- Financial planning, day-to-day administration and financial control are very good.
- The school offers good value for money.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Attainment is below average in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in some subjects it is well below.
- II. Timetabling arrangements produce many classes that have more than one teacher per subject, long gaps between lessons in certain subjects and inefficiencies in setting.
- III. Science provision in the school is unsatisfactory in a range of respects, including teaching, attainment, progress, expectations and aspects of accommodation.
- IV. Information and communications technology (ICT) provision, though much improved since the last inspection, is still not satisfactory.
- V. Unsatisfactory provision is made for the spiritual development of pupils.
- VI. The statutory requirements for a daily act of worship are not met, nor, in the sixth form and Key Stage 4, are those for the provision of religious education.
- VII. Pupils have too little experience of cultures derived from non-European sources.
- VIII. Consistency is lacking in the use of personal and social education lessons and registration times.
- IX. Reports, while good in many respects, give too little information on strengths and weakness in attainment.
- X. Literacy teaching, though a welcome development, lacks sufficient consistency in the quality of provision.

This is a good school because it has a great many very important strengths and is aware of, and is acting on, most of its shortcomings. Strengths far outweigh weaknesses. Governors will produce a plan of action based on addressing the weaknesses identified.

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made very considerable improvements since the last inspection. It has acted effectively on the need to improve safety and the quality of development planning; it has greatly improved the provision for ICT and the homework policy. The last report referred to limited teaching styles and poor facilities for the sixth form, but the school has successfully improved both. It has also improved the overall proportion of satisfactory and good teaching. Too little progress has been made in religious education provision in the sixth form and on providing a daily act of worship. The capacity for future improvement is good; managers and staff have a secure grasp of how to implement change and the school is strongly self-critical.

## Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/ASlevel examinations in 1999:

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

While this table indicates test and examination data for a single year, inspectors look more widely at attainment, taking note of evidence from lessons and pupils' work kept in files or on display as well as results from previous years. On this broad basis, a slightly different picture emerges, and standards are as follows.

At the end of Key Stage 3, overall attainment is below average. It is average in physical education, art, design and technology and religious education; standards are below average in mathematics, ICT, music and history; they are well below in English, science, geography and modern languages.

At Key Stage 4, standards overall are below average. They are above average in art and physical education; they are average in business studies, GNVQ subjects and music; they are below average in religious education, mathematics, design and technology, ICT, history, geography and English; they are well below average in science and modern languages.

Post-16 standards are broadly average. They are above average in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, art and the GNVQ subjects; they are average in business studies, modern languages, history and music; they are below average in science.

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Good in the majority of subjects	ICT and science
Years 10-11	Good	Mathematics	ICT and science
Sixth form	Good	Mathematics and geography	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Very good		

Ninety-five per cent of all lessons seen had teaching which was at least satisfactory. Good teaching is predominant: 43 per cent of all lessons had good teaching; very good teaching was found in 20 per cent, with two per cent in which it was excellent. The five per cent of unsatisfactory teaching was found in significant amounts in science and in very small amounts in a range of other subjects. Teaching of ICT is unsatisfactory because too little takes place across the curriculum as a whole; those lessons given by ICT specialists are generally well taught.



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

• **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Good. Despite the very few exceptions, the overwhelming proportion of pupils behave well both in lessons and around school. They show a positive attitude to learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Overall attendance has now reached 90 per cent and unauthorised absence has declined to an acceptable level.
Ethos*	Good: there is a strong commitment to high social and academic standards and to improvement where there is need. The atmosphere is pleasant and welcoming.
Leadership and management	Leadership is very good at whole-school level and in departments much is good or very good.
Curriculum	Good. Despite significant timetabling problems, the breadth of the curriculum offers all pupils a wide range of experiences suitable to their varied needs. Assessment arrangements are relatively new, but are already having a beneficial impact.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. This area is soundly managed but too few pupils are currently supported in class. Pupils withdrawn to the special unit receive effective help.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall: good policies are in place and staff set a good example in the area of social and moral provision. There is too little scope for spiritual development. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is good in some areas, but insufficient multicultural experience is offered.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good overall. -. There are sufficient teaching staff. -. More non-teaching staff are required to support pupils with special technical support. -. Accommodation is satisfactory. -. The level of resources is good.
Value for money	Good. Spending is high because the school attracts extra funding. Teaching and management are good, as are behaviour and attitudes. Progress is satisfactory from very low initial levels.

*\* Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

- **The parents' views of the school**

**What most parents like about the school**

- The school is approachable.
- The school gives a clear picture of what is taught
- The school enables pupils to achieve high standards.
- Homework arrangements are satisfactory
- Children like school.

**What some parents are not happy about**

- Information on progress is not satisfactory.
- Homework is not well organised.

NB: Unusually high levels of positive support were

NB: The percentages of dissatisfied responses in

offered on all issues.

these two areas are low. Only in these two questions did the percentage exceed five per cent.

Inspectors fully endorse the very positive views of parents on nearly all issues raised in the questionnaire and at the meeting. On those matters which concern a very few parents, inspectors judge that information given to parents on the progress of pupils is good and that homework is generally well organised.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to continue improvement in the school the governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- a) Raise attainment further in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in post-16 by:
  - pursuing existing plans for extending the use of target-setting to all year groups and striving for further accuracy in its use by staff, pupils and parents;
  - increasing the use of in-class support for pupils with special needs;
  - strengthening the provision for basic literacy teaching.
  
- a) Rectify deficiencies in timetabling which currently hinder progress. In particular:
  - reduce incidence of split classes where the same pupil groups are taught by several staff;
  - reduce the wide gaps between lessons and the discontinuity in learning this promotes, especially in music, physical education and religious education in Key Stage 3;
  - limit the way current setting arrangements leave some teaching groups with too wide an ability range.
  
- a) Raise standards in science provision by continuing existing monitoring programmes and by taking decisive action to:
  - achieve consistently good teaching quality;
  - promote higher expectations of pupils in all key stages;
  - improve the quality of rooms so that they all offer a stimulating learning environment for pupils.
  
- a) Complete the implementation of ICT provision in Key Stages 3 and 4 so that all statutory requirements are met. In particular ensure that:
  - pupils are taught and assessed on all areas of the programmes of study;
  - staff rapidly become confident at using ICT in all subject areas;
  - full use is made of the good existing ICT resources.
  
- a) Take all necessary steps to provide a daily act of worship and enhance pupils' spiritual development and by providing extensive opportunities across the curriculum in all key stages.

In addition the school should take note of the need to:

1. offer precise information in pupils' reports about strengths and weaknesses in attainment in subjects;
2. make more effective use of morning registration;
3. improve the consistency of personal and social education provision;
4. expand pupils' experience of non-European cultures.

#### 4. INTRODUCTION

##### 4. Characteristics of the school

5.Kenton School is a very large mixed comprehensive school with technology college status. There are 1,933 pupils on roll including 251 in the sixth form. Post-16 students share premises with a large adult education facility on the school site.

6.Rolls are rising and the school is oversubscribed. Boys slightly outnumber girls. The vast majority of pupils are white, with approximately three per cent coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. Pupils come from many wards in the city as well as the school's immediate neighbourhood on the north-west fringe of Newcastle. Pupils' home backgrounds are very varied, with some being relatively advantaged, but more disadvantaged: at 28 per cent, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is significantly above the national average.

7.Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below that found nationally, especially in terms of the scores on nationally validated cognitive ability tests. About 25 per cent of pupils are on the school's special educational needs register; 78 pupils are in stages 3 to 5 and 36 have formal statements.

8.Since the last inspection, the area served by the school has changed significantly: many pupils were accommodated by Kenton following the closure or threatened closure of two neighbouring schools in 1995. Kenton School no longer serves only the suburbs surrounding it but also draws from many inner city wards. Within the last 18 months it has changed again, to the extent that it is held in growing esteem by the local community, and nearby primary schools are supplying pupils representing the full ability range.

9.Another major change has been the appointments made at senior level, with a new Headteacher in post for four terms and a new deputy in his first term. In addition, the newly opened post-16 and continuing education block represents a major addition to the school's and the community's facilities.

10.The broad aim of the school is to help pupils subscribe to education for life, that is to:

- acquire a thirst for knowledge;
- view the learning process as beginning in school but extending throughout adulthood;
- see learning as intellectual development, but also as a practical and immediately useful skill for life in school, work, the home and the community.

1.Currently the school is focusing on:

- raising attainment in all key stages;
- improving communications in a very large school;
- target-setting, especially in Year 11 and Year 7;
- staff development, especially through paired observation;
- establishing a pastoral system based on year tutors;
- developing partnership with parents;
- providing increased scope for study support after school.

**Key indicators****Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year: 1999	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	175	165	340

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<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

National Curriculum test results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	56	94	57
	Girls	80	83	55
	Total	136	177	112
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	40 (52)	53 (54)	33 (39)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	14 (21)	28 (25)	7 (12)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

  

Teacher assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	58	104	88
	Girls	83	92	71
	Total	141	196	159
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	42 (33)	58 (56)	46 (49)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	21 (17)	35 (25)	21 (27)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	183	143	326

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	37	157	167
	Girls	42	128	133
	Total	79	285	300
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	24 (23)	87 (84)	92 (92)
	National	47.9 (44.6)	88.5 (89.8)	93.9 (95.2)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of <i>such pupils</i> who achieved all those they studied:		Number	% success rate
	School	58	50
	National		n/a

### Attainment in the Sixth form<sup>3</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1999	17	37	54

<sup>2</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

<sup>3</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

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	13.8	16.3	15.5 (11.6)	2	2	1.7 (2)
National	n/a	n/a	n/a (17.6)	n/a	n/a	(2.8)

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved this qualification:	Number	% success rate
School	0	n/a
National		79.1

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% success rate
School	50	78
National		72

### Attendance

Percentage of half-days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
Authorised absence	School		88
	National comparative data		92
Unauthorised absence	School		0.9
	National comparative data		1.1

### Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
Fixed period Permanent		211
		6

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
Very good or better Satisfactory or better Less than satisfactory		55
		95
		5

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

1. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average, based on all sources of evidence. Solely in terms of recent National Curriculum assessments in English, mathematics and science, it is well below average, with national percentages for pupils gaining Level 5 or above in the low 60s, while the school's results are in the 40s and 50s. However, on the basis of current pupils' work in Key Stage 3, standards are higher than this in English and mathematics, while still lying below the national expectations. In science, current work remains well below average. In other subjects, standards vary considerably, but collectively they indicate that attainment is below rather than well below average.

2. In English, high-attaining pupils write accurately in a variety of styles. Many average or below-average attainers tend to write with less accuracy and only in simple sentences. While some pupils speak and read very fluently, there are more pupils than average who find such skills hard to develop. In mathematics, some high-attaining pupils are working at levels above national expectations in all aspects of the subject. Average and below-average attainers are competent in number work and in their grasp of shape, space and measure, though algebra skills are generally weak. In science, standards vary too much. While some higher-attaining pupils show a good understanding of materials and their properties, for example, and some lower-attaining pupils can conduct filtration experiments very well, others show a poor grasp of physical processes and readily confuse electricity with magnetism.

3. Amongst the remaining subjects, standards already match national averages and expectations in design and technology, art, religious education and physical education. Attainment is below average in history, ICT and music, and well below average in geography and modern languages.

4. Boys attain less well than girls, though the differences are broadly similar to those found nationally. The school has worked hard to make staff aware of teaching approaches which can reduce this gap and have ensured that their mentoring programmes also help to correct the tendency.

5. In tests over recent years there has been no significant and constant trend, though end-of-key stage work in current Year 9 indicates a slight rise compared with 1998/9 results.

6. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is also below average, taking all evidence into consideration. GCSE and GNVQ examination evidence indicates a well below average proportion of pupils gaining five A\* to C grades. It was 24 per cent in 1998, compared with a national figure of 47 per cent. In many subjects, however, indeed the great majority, results are better than this with A\* to C scores occasionally in line with national averages, but more often below rather than well below average. Some subjects, notably science and modern languages, depress the five A\* to C percentage very markedly. On the full range of evidence, including the current work of Year 11, standards are above average in art and physical education; they match expectations in music, GNVQ subjects and business studies; they are below average in mathematics, English, geography, history, ICT, design and technology and religious education, but are well below average in modern languages and science.

7. At the end of post-16 education, overall standards are broadly in line with those found nationally. A/AS level points scores, usually well below average, have improved to 15.5 per cent, which is below the national figure, while GNVQ courses are generally in line with or above national standards.

8. In individual subjects at post-16, standards are above average in mathematics, English, design and technology, geography, art and the GNVQ courses. Attainment broadly matches national averages in history, music, modern languages, ICT, business studies and psychology. However, there are below average standards in all three science subjects.

9. Progress across Key Stage 3 is broadly satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with attainment which is well below average and are attaining at below (rather than well below) average levels by the age of 14. Standards,



and hence progress, are still not high enough in terms of core subject National Curriculum test results, but of the lessons observed during the inspection, nearly 90 per cent had satisfactory or better progress, including over 35 per cent in which it was at least good. Based on the gains made by current Year 9 pupils across the key stage, and the quality of progress in lessons inspected, there is good progress in some subjects, notably mathematics, design and technology, art and religious education. Progress is satisfactory in English, geography, history and modern languages. However, there is unsatisfactory progress in music due to poor continuity in learning, in ICT as a result of too little provision by experienced teachers across the curriculum as a whole, and in science. Here, there is too much teaching which is unsatisfactory, and expectations have been too low compared with other subjects.

10. In Key Stage 4, overall progress is broadly satisfactory but varies considerably. Past progress has not been adequate, since GCSE results remain well below national averages for many subjects while other subjects produce better results with the same pupils. Results still fall below the predictions made for pupils and subjects by a widely used and reliable national scheme. However, current Year 10 and Year 11 pupils are benefiting from much closer monitoring by the school, and this has led already to additional support and a better focus on pupils' learning needs. In lessons in both Years 10 and 11, progress is good; very few lessons had unsatisfactory progress, while good, very good and excellent progress accounted for 57 per cent of all lessons seen. In individual subjects, in the great majority pupils make good progress. This is true for mathematics, English, geography, art, music, physical education, business studies and the part 1 GNVQ courses. There is satisfactory progress in modern languages, design and technology, religious education and history. As in Key Stage 3, there is unsatisfactory progress in science and ICT.

11. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress overall. They make good progress where work has been carefully structured into manageable targets and they have a clear picture of what is expected of them. Support staff also help pupils make good progress when they have been fully aware of the objectives of lessons. Progress is unsatisfactory in the minority of lessons where teachers fail to give clear explanations or anticipate problems from such pupils before they occur. Progress is also hindered on a widespread basis because there are too few special needs support staff to assist the many pupils with special educational needs.

12. At post-16, progress is now good. Until recently, A and A/S level students were not showing sufficient added value, but this is no longer the case, now that attainment standards have risen. Progress in vocational subjects has been good for some time and remains strong. Across sixth form courses as a whole, there is a great deal of good and very good teaching and an equally positive response from students. Both factors contribute to the good progress being made. In addition, many courses have been only recently introduced and are managed with enthusiasm and a careful monitoring of their effectiveness. There is very good progress in mathematics, art, geography and ICT, and good progress in design and technology, modern languages, English, music, psychology, history and all GNVQ courses. In the sciences, progress is satisfactory.

13. In many subjects across the school, but especially in Key Stages 3 and 4, much which is good is relatively new. The quality of teaching, for example, has only recently included the rich variety of strategies and approaches which draw such a positive response from the majority of pupils. Teachers' use of day-to-day marking to help pupils to improve their work has also benefited from recent moves to tighten up practice. Above all, assessment and target-setting, currently having such a beneficial effect on progress and standards of attainment, have only been established in a systematic way within the last eighteen months; their full impact has not yet been carried through into end-of-key-stage results, even though it is apparent in the lessons observed during the inspection. Progress across longer time spans, such as terms, years and key stages, suffers more from various adverse factors than single lessons do. The latter consistently indicate good short-term gains being made, whereas continuity over longer spells is less effective due to the problems of widely spaced lessons and the limited consistency between different teachers taking the same group. In addition, while good teaching generally leads to satisfactory or good progress within lessons, the scope for good and very good progress is constrained by wider factors such as the broad ability range within current sets and the lack of in-class support for pupils with special educational needs in some of these.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

14. Overall, most pupils display good attitudes to their learning and this is complemented by good standards of behaviour. Relationships are also good and are conducive to learning and social development. Opportunities provided for personal development are satisfactory. Only five per cent of parents had any concerns about the behaviour of pupils.

15. In class, most pupils display effective levels of concentration, which are often sustained to an appropriate level. Good teaching encourages interest and enthusiasm in most pupils, as well as a genuine willingness to learn. Where opportunities are provided for independent learning, pupils make constructive use of their initiatives and value the trust shown to them. In some classes, the large number of pupils with educational behaviour difficulties can cause problems, and staff employ a range of strategies to overcome these. Nevertheless, such pupils can occasionally be intransigent. On the whole, however, pupils with special educational needs work well and show persistence.

16. Outside the classroom, most pupils are polite and respectful to staff and visitors. Younger pupils show a strong willingness to share information about themselves and their school. Around the school, particularly when standing in queues in the canteen, they are generally orderly and disciplined, but occasionally a very small minority displays inappropriate and occasionally boisterous behaviour. The playground often provides an opportunity for positive social interaction. Friendships are evident within and across race and gender boundaries. Minority ethnic pupils are well integrated. These relationships promote effective learning and tolerance amongst the school community. There are no visible signs of bullying. A very small number of pupils have reported incidents, which most believe to have been dealt with properly and speedily. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are constructive. Most pupils respect their school and property and there are very few signs of vandalism or graffiti.

17. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to serve the school through work experience, and in the sixth form, students support the learning of younger pupils through the lunchtime homework club. Younger pupils assist with classroom tasks.

18. Since the last report, the behaviour of pupils has improved and attitudes to learning are now good. Exclusions, formerly significant at about 11 per cent, have recently shown a marked decline.

### **Attendance**

19. Attendance at the school is now satisfactory: overall levels have risen from 88 per cent in the last full year to 90 per cent in the third week of the autumn term and despite the very extensive nature of the school site, the vast majority of pupils arrive on time for lessons. All absences are thoroughly investigated by committed and hard working staff, effectively supported by the education welfare social worker. The commercial electronic registration system is used efficiently to record and monitor attendance and punctuality. Some form tutors also keep manual registers and this enables them to monitor effectively. Pupils are electronically registered throughout the day and this ensures that internal truancy is investigated quickly. This approach has the support of the majority of parents. However, a significant minority of pupils persistently truant from school and some absences are condoned by a small percentage of parents so that authorised absence is above the national average, but unauthorised absence is slightly below the national average. Since the last report, the school has made marked progress on attendance.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

20. Teaching in the school is good. It was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of the lessons observed during the inspection. 43 per cent of lessons had good teaching, 20 per cent very good and about two per cent excellent teaching. In each key stage, good teaching predominates.

21. In Key Stage 3, most subjects have good teaching. This is true for mathematics, English, geography, design and technology, modern languages, physical education, art, history and religious education. Teaching is sound overall in music. It is unsatisfactory in ICT and in science, each for different reasons. There are insufficient lessons in which ICT plays a prominent part; however, when it is the focus of teaching by ICT specialists, the quality is good. In science, there is too little consistency in teaching quality, so that very good and unsatisfactory teaching coexist. Of the Key Stage 3 lessons observed, across all subjects, 94 per cent had satisfactory or better teaching, with 55 per cent comprising good, very good and excellent teaching.

22. For the key stage as a whole, teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and of the relevant National Curriculum or examination board requirements. They plan well-structured lessons and now use a far wider range of teaching strategies than noted in the previous inspection report. In the great majority of lessons, pupils

are managed well, sometimes very well. In a small minority, scattered across a range of subjects, some challenging pupils with poor concentration are not engaged as well as they might be. Generally, support assistants are not available to help in these lessons. Marking of books is generally done well with clear marks and comments which enable pupils to improve. Homework is set and used in line with school policy by most staff, but a minority do not follow the system closely enough. The expectations teachers place on pupils are satisfactory overall. In some subjects, they are consistently high, in mathematics for example, while in others they vary between staff in the same department. Collectively, they are too low in science. The use of time and resources also varies, although overall it is satisfactory. Many of the lessons with good and very good teaching are characterised by strong pace and extensive use of a variety of resources, while in some satisfactorily taught lessons and those with unsatisfactory teaching, the poor pace and under-use of available resources are often factors.

23. At Key Stage 4, teaching shows a similar range of strengths and weaknesses. There remains scope for raising expectations and improving the pace of lessons. However, homework is well used in this key stage. The many strengths in Key Stage 4 teaching collectively lead to even fewer unsatisfactory lessons than in Key Stage 3; there is also a greater proportion of good and very good teaching, with these categories comprise about 72 per cent of all lessons seen compared with 55 per cent in Key Stage 3. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is very good in mathematics and good in GNVQs, design and technology, English, art, physical education, business studies, geography and modern languages. Teaching quality is sound in history, music and religious education. However, it is unsatisfactory in science and in ICT, showing the same shortcomings as in Key Stage 3, too little consistency in science and too little coverage in ICT.

24. At post-16, teaching is good. No lessons had unsatisfactory teaching and nearly 84 per cent had teaching which was good or very good. All aspects of teaching are at least good. Expectations and pace are now strong and the subject expertise of very many staff is impressive and a source of great respect amongst students. Equally, students respond well to the very good management strategies of teachers; they involve students actively in lessons, give them considerable responsibility and show them respect. In some subjects, notably in mathematics and in geography, and in some aspects of design and technology, teaching is very good. Other subjects are characterised by good teaching, namely English, science, modern languages, art, music, history, design and technology, business studies and all the GNVQ courses.

25. In both key stages and in the sixth form, many lessons exhibit a range of features which combine to produce very good and sometimes excellent teaching. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson on books of the murder/mystery genre, there was excellent teaching: very clear targets were set for all pupils and tasks and resources were sufficiently varied as to give challenge and support to pupils of all ability levels. The teacher maintained a brisk pace throughout and showed excellent skills in reading aloud to the class to capture their interest from the outset. A Year 8 science lesson on the periodic table had an equally arresting start and showed very good teaching throughout; the teacher's enthusiasm and positive attitude engaged pupils initially, but first-rate planning ensured that they remained actively involved in demanding activities all lesson. Particularly effective was the teacher's great supply of questions, constantly testing how well pupils had understood and then prompting them to think more about their initial answers.

26. Very good teaching in a Year 11 mathematics lesson built on clever use of demonstrations early in the lesson: these helped pupils to acquire a rapid grasp of the main concept, the centres of mass of a plane. Very good use of notes on the overhead projector helped to remind pupils at key points as the lesson unfolded, and the teacher made it clear that much was expected of each pupil. A logical sequence of activities was structured so that pupils moved rapidly on to new and increasingly challenging tasks as the lesson progressed.

27. A very well taught geography lesson with Year 13 also revealed detailed planning and a structure that helped students to progress. The lesson also benefited from the use of many resources, including audiovisual aids. High standards were set through the use of demanding questions put to students, while the enthusiasm and clear communication of the teacher engendered a very positive atmosphere.

28. Where teaching is less successful, there is usually a poor matching of tasks to pupils' needs and abilities. This was true of a Year 8 science lesson with unsatisfactory teaching: planning was poor and focused on a demonstration which was too limited to offer much instruction to pupils. The worksheet they then used was too difficult for many, so that pace and pupils' concentration deteriorated.

29. Similarly, in a Year 7 physical education lesson, planning did not make it clear what the purpose of the

lesson was, nor how pupils could contribute. An overlengthy explanation from the teacher weakened the pace of the lesson and tasks did not follow each other in a logical way, so failed to offer sufficient challenge and support.

30. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is mostly sound and well planned. Material appropriate to pupils' levels is provided and expectations are generally reasonable. The best lessons offer lots of scope for pupils to learn through experimentation and also tend to acquaint pupils with the key content before asking them to write about it or go on to put it into practice: this was done very effectively in an orienteering lesson, for example. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs where pupils are not clearly told what is expected and when teachers fail to adapt to an unsatisfactory response from pupils.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

31. Curriculum provision in the school is good. It adequately reflects the school's overall aim of an education for life within a framework of commitment to the needs of all pupils. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in all subjects except ICT. Religious education requirements are met in Key Stage 3, but the school does not comply with the statutory requirements for a daily act of worship or for provision for religious education in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. A clear policy ensures that personal and social education includes information about topics that deal with prejudice and discrimination facing minority ethnic communities, women, the disabled community and sexual orientation.

32. The curriculum has good overall breadth and balance at Key Stage 3, and all pupils follow relevant National Curriculum programmes of study. Identified pupils are taught in support groups. However, the time allocated to art and music is low at various points in this key stage. At Key Stage 4, pupils continue to receive a good, broad and balanced entitlement, with a range of options in addition to the core curriculum. Subjects are arranged so that all pupils have access to a range of post-16 progression routes. Most follow a single modern foreign language course as part of their chosen route. Some 50 pupils have been formally disapplied from the National Curriculum and pursue a work-related curriculum and do not take a foreign language. The focus for these pupils is a range of basic skills, both social and academic, set within a pre-vocational framework. They take GCSE or Certificate of Achievement accredited courses. Another discrete cohort of pupils follows GNVQ foundation courses in business and manufacturing, with work experience opportunities closely linked to their programmes of study. There is a very good balance of courses on offer in the post-16 programme. Pupils have access to a number of A level routes or choose from a wide range of GNVQ intermediate or advanced courses. Learning opportunities have been greatly enhanced by the excellent new study facilities, which allow for continuing education in the evenings, including distance learning courses.

33. There is satisfactory access and good equality of opportunity for all pupils in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. The school has a stated policy of encouraging the delivery of cross-curricular themes and dimensions. Citizenship, health studies and research skills are successfully delivered via subject areas. The cross-curricular approach to delivering ICT is not currently meeting statutory requirements. Designated subjects are not consistently delivering the full programmes of study. Pupils have good access and opportunity at Key Stage 4, where the school endeavours to maximise achievement within courses that prepare students for life. Arrangements for the personal and social education for all pupils are good. This discrete timetabled subject covers health education, drugs education and elements of sex education. All pupils receive comprehensive career guidance. The school makes very good use of the careers service and other local agencies and industry, including an annual career convention at the school. Time allocated for religious education is insufficient to study the local agreed syllabus.

34. Planning for progression and continuity is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 and broadly satisfactory in Key Stage 4. This is despite several strengths, for example, individual subject planning for progression and continuity is good, ensuring a smooth transition through both stages. There are also good procedures and smooth transition between all key stages. After initial mixed-ability groups in Year 7, pupils are set by ability in most subjects. However, the present curriculum design of three population groups at Key Stage 3 restricts the potential for more precise setting arrangements in mathematics, foreign languages, science and the humanities and limits the opportunity for pupils to take two foreign languages. The new 50-hour, two-week timetable restricts pupils to receiving some subjects once every fortnight. This lack of continuity is compounded when classes have a number of different teachers for the same subject, and also when they have two-hour lessons, sometimes with split teaching. This problem is found in nearly every subject of the curriculum, but is particularly marked in Key Stage 3 classes, where it is not unusual for pupils to have 17 to 20 different

teachers.

35.The provision for those withdrawn for additional help is generally sound and sometimes good. Corrective reading is well applied, while work in English and French is suitably differentiated.

36.The provision for extracurricular activities is very good. There is an innovative range of curriculum support sessions after school that forms part of the school's belief that motivation and achievement can be increased through curriculum enrichment. The programme includes numerous sporting activities, homework and study clubs, the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, ICT and examination preparation programmes. The school evaluates this provision using the Prince's Trust study support code of practice and is soon to be established as a study support centre.

37.Operation of the new procedures for assessing and recording of pupils' attainment is good. Under the guidance of senior management, departments have shared good practice to produce a uniform system throughout the school, which has been integrated with a central, analytical database. The system has potential to be very good or better, once it is fully embedded into the daily practice of all teachers and departments. At each key stage and in the sixth form, the school uses a comprehensive range of assessment tools to form an accurate profile of pupils' current and potential attainment. All departments contribute grades for attainment and effort to the school's centralised recording system by electronic means, thus providing an up-to-date, comprehensive record of pupils' attainment as they progress through the school. This data is readily available to all teachers, enabling them to set targets for expected performance or improvement for each pupil and sixth form student.

38.The new pupil planners have improved the communication with parents and pupils' motivation to succeed. They contain daily records of homework, timetables, a record of credits gained and results of half-term assessments. Use of the planners by teachers and pupils varies in effectiveness, and there is no system for teacher monitoring of the planners.

39.The use of assessment information to affect the curriculum of pupils is good. The school uses the new system to identify pupils who are under-achieving or have potential to improve. Form tutors are now responsible for monitoring the academic and pastoral progress of pupils and are able to provide comprehensive information to parents. Target-setting is well established in Year 7, particularly in regard to reading intervention programmes, and at Key stage 4, where the provision of extra support and revision classes is formalised by home-school contracts. The school has prioritised the development of the study support programme as a main feature in raising pupils' achievement and has structured support procedures outlined in the school development plan, thus ensuring effective evolution of the system.

40.Reporting to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 has much that is accessible and helpful to parents and pupils. The end-of-year reports contain comprehensive information regarding pupils' attitudes to work and the courses they have followed, but they do not meet with statutory requirements due to inconsistencies between departments when reporting in the comment section. This section too often lacks detail about the pupils' strengths and weaknesses in attainment in subjects.

41.Individual educational programmes are in place for pupils with statements of special educational needs and they are reviewed annually. They are well constructed, but entirely concerned with general skills and do not contain subject-specific targets. External agencies are involved in annual reviews of whole-year groups and parents are involved during individual review sessions. Regular testing takes place to determine progress of pupils with special educational needs. Assessment is a strength of the provision for pupils with special educational needs; there is good use of a variety of tests and frequent retesting, with the results leading to well-planned individual education plans and reviews.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

42.The school makes good provision for the moral, social and cultural development of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, but unsatisfactory provision is made for spiritual development.

43.The school has a good ethos. Most pupils understand and are guided by the principles of being prepared to learn, showing respect and never bringing anything harmful or illegal to school.

44.Moral issues are addressed through many subjects in ways which pupils can understand. For example, pupils learn about right and wrong through studying the actions of characters in Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' in English, by looking at the effects of alcohol on the body in science, and considering issues such as drug abuse, abortion and euthanasia in religious education or personal and social education. The school has a clear set of guidelines governing behaviour, including bullying and racism, and senior staff monitor these carefully.

45.The school provides good opportunities for the social development of pupils through learning to work together in pairs and groups during lessons and through an extensive range of extracurricular activities. Of special note are the music, art, drama and sports clubs, which cater for a wide range of interests and abilities. In addition, there are opportunities to develop social skills through the annual summer camp, public speaking competitions and the Duke of Edinburgh and Lord Mayor of Newcastle award schemes.

46.The cultural development of pupils is catered for through subjects such as literature, modern languages, history, art, music and religious education, in which pupils learn about aspects of their own and other cultural traditions. The school's provision for pupils does not include extensive experience of non-European cultures.

47.Opportunities for spiritual development are unsatisfactory and tend to be left to chance. The school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily collective act of worship. Pupils attend two assemblies each week. These follow a theme, which is often interesting, but there is no sense of occasion or provision for reflection or worship. On three days each week, pupils spend 20 minutes with their form tutor, but again, opportunities for quiet reflection are not taken. Some subjects, such as art, music, physical education and religious education, provide uplifting experiences for pupils and opportunities for celebration, but there is little evidence of a spiritual dimension in most teaching.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

48.Overall, the new pastoral provision is of a good standard and a significant and growing strength of the school. It continues to support most aspects of pupils' individual and collective needs.

49.Staff at all levels make effective use of assemblies, extracurricular activity, careers lessons and many aspects of personal and social education lessons to raise pupils' self-esteem. Morning registration is used well by many form tutors to build relationships and to monitor pupils' individual progress and personal development by checking pupil planners. Other staff use these opportunities less well. There are good systems in place to record and monitor pupils' individual progress. However, it is rare for the full 20 minutes of most registration periods to be used constructively for social, administrative or academic purposes.

50.The personal and social education programme is used satisfactorily to cover health, drugs, sex education and career choices. Careers lessons also provide pupils with appropriate levels of information, support and guidance about post-16 opportunities.

51.Staff implement effectively the new policy on behaviour and discipline, which complements the new code of conduct, as well as the school's equal opportunities policy. This provides a foundation for good practice and enables staff to achieve positive attitudes to learning, discourage aggressive and antisocial behaviour, as well as to celebrate pupils' achievements.

52.The in-school suspension unit works effectively to ensure that pupils understand and value the school's high standard of discipline and to reduce exclusions.

53.There is an effective attendance policy and procedures to record, monitor and investigate pupil absences. Good strategies are employed to reward improved attendance, to involve parents through rapid home contact in the case of absence, to assist pupils who have problems in coming to school and to combat internal truancy. The educational welfare officer provides additional support, guidance and counselling for concerned pupils and parents, which further reinforce a good pastoral provision.

54.The arrangements for child protection are satisfactory, but the governors should ensure that all concerns regarding pupils are referred directly to the designated teacher, rather than up the chain of command via year heads. Training about child protection is available to both teaching and non-teaching staff. The policy on health and safety is implemented to provide sound levels of security and to ensure the well-being of the school community.

55.Overall, since the last report, the school has made a significant improvement in its provision for ensuring the support, guidance and welfare of its pupils.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

56.Parents believe that there is a good partnership between them and the school, and this is borne out by inspection evidence. Most parents enjoy a purposeful relationship with the school and appreciate the efforts of the staff.

57.The school continues to provide good quality information through the school and sixth form prospectuses and the annual report from governors. These documents are informative, easily understood by parents and comply with statutory requirements. This complements the information provided through consultation/target-setting meetings and options evenings for Year 9, which are attended by many parents.

58.All parents are provided with a home-school agreement, which ensures that parents are aware of the school's values and its educational provision. A quarterly curriculum newsletter informs parents about what is taught in the classroom, which supplements the annual pupils' report giving details of attitudes to learning and personal development. However, the new reports do not provide consistent information on levels of pupils' attainment, thus failing to comply with statutory requirements.

59.Pupils are now provided with homework planners and these enable parents to assess their child's daily progress. Some parents use this channel of communication to inform the teacher about absence, but a significant number of parents do not sign the planner.

60.There is good attendance at parents' evenings for the discussion of reports, and other opportunities are given when specific concerns arise. Parents are provided with learning opportunities through the adult education service, which offers courses for parents to enable them to support their child's reading and improve their parenting skills. Most parents support school functions and productions.

61.Links with the wider community are good. The school has connections with a large number of employers through its work placement programme for Year 10 pupils. The geography department uses outside resources to develop field studies, the sixth form invites in speakers, including those from higher education establishments, and the Rotary club provides further opportunities across the school for debates. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to visit other places of worship and enhance their learning of other faiths and cultures.

62.There are good links with partner primary schools and efforts are made to provide strong continuity and progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. The Headteacher as well as Year 7 tutors and the school SENCO are all involved in meeting pupils and their parents in the primary schools which send children to Kenton. This successfully creates a much stronger link than usual for pupils and parents as transfer takes place. The school offers information communication technology training for colleagues in the primary school to enable them to deliver ITC across the curriculum.

63.The adult education service and the school work closely to ensure the continuation of courses, offering adults and sixth formers joint learning opportunities. This interaction effectively supports students' education and their social development.

64.Since the last report, the school has improved its links with the community, but it still underplays contacts with the many minority ethnic communities within the city.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

65.This is a school with good leadership and management. Indeed, the sense of educational direction established by the Headteacher, and supported by staff and governors, is very strong. This is the result of careful thought and extensive consultation having been given to the school's central concerns and specific objectives. The focus on lifelong learning and parental and community involvement is entirely appropriate for the school and its particular needs. The school's development plan and its very regular communication with pupils, parents and the wider community give substance to these aims.

66. Not only do leaders provide vision, but they are very successful in communicating it to others. Staff at every level in the school are unusually clear about its aims, values and policies. This reflects a range of effective strategies, including the very valuable daily briefing for all staff, regular memoranda from the Headteacher, the policy of consultation with the staff through questionnaires when important matters are being reviewed and the regular pastoral and academic meetings timetabled across the year. Style and approach have been important, and the Headteacher has generally been very successful in establishing a collaborative style for meetings and a supportive approach to ensuring that staff understand policy and feel involved and valued in running the school. Similarly, parents have been appreciative of recent moves to give them more and better information about the school and their children's progress. Through meeting them in primary school premises, when their children were still in Year 6, the school has been seen as approachable and accommodating. This is reinforced by the involvement of Year 7 and Year 11 parents in helping to set targets and revision strategies for their children, working on the advice of staff.

67. As a result of clear leadership, a caring and inclusive approach, and very effective communication, the school's ethos is good. There is a welcoming atmosphere throughout the school and a strong commitment to high standards. These are already being achieved in terms of behaviour and relationships, while on the academic front, the commitment to improvement shown by pupils, staff and parents is impressive.

68. The school is clearly good at development planning and this represents a marked improvement since the last inspection. The governors support and respond to a planning process led by the Headteacher and the senior management team. Plans emerge from agreed aims and they are well structured and properly supported by costings. Appropriate strategies for evaluation are built into plans, and deadlines are prominent.

69. At departmental level, development plans are also generally good and reflect clear vision and good managerial skills. The great majority of departments work to sound aims and have realistic strategies for achieving them. The SENCO (special educational needs coordinator) has wide experience and organises the team and administrative tasks competently. Systems to assist pupils with special needs have been developed and adapted to suit the school's own requirements.

70. The school has not had a tradition of close monitoring of teaching or of curriculum development, but has recently established arrangements which are broadly satisfactory. While the Headteacher has personally observed all members of staff teach, there is not yet a fully systematic programme in place for the senior management team to monitor teaching or the work of heads of department. Some is done informally and, where problems arise, intensive support and monitoring is focused on particular areas, as, for example, with the considerable amount of senior management team time currently being given to monitoring in the science department. Staff training has also involved a paired observation programme, so that nearly all staff have watched a colleague and have worked on a joint plan to improve some aspect of their teaching. However, comprehensive monitoring by heads of departments is not in place.

71. Monitoring of the curriculum has been effective in reshaping it in recent years so that it now offers greater breadth and balance than is usually found, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Changes are made in response to needs as they become known. Some matters elude monitoring because it has not yet become as comprehensive as it needs to be. For example, the variable quality of personal and social education provision, the literacy programme and the use of registration time had not been fully appreciated prior to the inspection, nor had some of the problems of access to ICT or the impact of several timetabling deficiencies.

72. Governors are supportive of the school and place great faith in its Headteacher and other managers. They are less often in school to observe it in session than are governors generally, but attendance at school events and at governing body meetings is good. While they are rightly keen to allow the professionals they have appointed room to manage and to teach, they have limited first-hand information about how well their appointees operate. This restricts their ability to offer well-informed praise and support to staff when it is deserved or to fully appreciate the precise nature of any problems in the schools provision on which they may receive reports. The governors nevertheless fulfil the great majority of their statutory duties. To meet them fully, they are aware that ICT provision in Key Stages 3 and 4 and religious education provision in Key Stage 4 and post-16 need to be extended. Appraisal and act of worship arrangements also fail to meet requirements.

73. The overall strengths in leadership and management are most clearly illustrated by the school's approach to improvement between inspections. Since the last inspection, it has made good progress, often very good progress, on the key issues. It has also established an approach to change drawing on effective systems and a



positive attitude which are well able to promote good improvement in the future.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

74. For most areas of the curriculum there are sufficient well-qualified and experienced teachers to provide a good standard of teaching. In most departments there is a good mix of more senior, experienced staff and young teachers. There are not enough specialist teachers to cover all the work in boys' physical education and the lack is having a negative impact on the standards achieved. For religious education, there are enough specialists to teach all the existing commitments. However, to rectify the present failure to fulfil the statutory requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the post-16 curriculum, classes would have to be taken by non-specialist teachers. There are also insufficient specialist teachers of ICT. Only the SENCO and the deputy have specialist special needs qualifications. Others have done short courses or have relevant experience and they are deployed well. However, work is confined to pupils with the most severe difficulties. Long-term absence due to ill health is affecting the quality of education in English, mathematics and science.

75. The school is very well served by non-teaching staff, who make a significant contribution to the quality of education and of care which the school provides for its pupils. All administrative and financial duties are discharged to a high standard by well-qualified and experienced staff. Technical support for science is very good, although staff are fully stretched to provide for the needs of the school and the extensive programme of evening classes. There are insufficient computer/electronics technicians to meet all the needs presented by departments now using such equipment. There is a particular shortfall in the maintenance and repair of such equipment in music. On the whole, the site is well managed and maintained, though at the time of inspection there was evidence of a backlog of repairs and some parts of the school are in need of redecoration. There has also been a recent shortage of cleaners, with some areas consequently suffering from neglect. Learning support assistants, including those specialising in speech and language, give good in-class support to pupils with special educational needs, but there are insufficient to support all the classes that include high numbers of such pupils.

76. Staff new to the school receive appropriate and thoughtful induction. Newly qualified teachers are appreciative of the support they are given. A recent innovation has given all teachers a period of time devoted to their own professional development and all teachers have been allocated time to work in pairs on a variety of projects designed to improve their professional skills. This successful scheme, which is to be further developed, has enabled most staff to expand their range of teaching methodology and skills. Other forms of in-service training are carefully linked to the teachers' own developmental needs and to the school's development plan. Although there is not a formal appraisal system for teachers, all have been observed teaching by the Headteacher and some have monitored lessons as heads of department. All teachers have also observed lessons as part of the paired observation programme. The school provides very well for the training and professional development of non-teaching staff and several have been supported through courses leading to degrees and higher professional qualifications.

77. The school is accommodated in five main blocks. Four have been developed from the reorganisation of three former schools and the fifth is a newly built centre for post-16 and community education. The site provides satisfactory accommodation for both pupils' and the community use. Community use has increased seven-fold since the last inspection and currently over 2,500 students are enrolled.

78. Overall teaching areas are adequate for delivery of the National Curriculum. Rooms for all curriculum areas are effectively grouped together, though for design and technology this includes a block of four mobile classrooms. Conditions are cramped and unsuitable in some science laboratories and the acoustics are poor in some rooms used for modern foreign languages. Social areas and study facilities for the sixth form in the new block are very good. Accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory and is good in the two specialist units. All ground floor areas of the school are accessible to wheelchairs and some areas, including the library, the computer rooms and the language base, are well furnished for the needs of pupils with hearing difficulties.

79. The site continues to be maintained by a committed and well-managed team. Some areas have good decor and displays and there are some attractive planted areas. However, the fabric of the four older blocks is deteriorating and the costs of basic repairs and maintenance are increasing. This restricts funds for site improvements and for cleaning, which is not consistently satisfactory. The gymnasiums are bleak and some toilet areas are unsatisfactory. The internal exclusion unit, some corridors and the social and dining areas are

largely plain and functional. There are a number of areas of considerable congestion at changes of lessons. The buildings are effectively fenced and secure. The playing fields are not secure and suffer vandalism and dog fouling.

80. Good progress has been made with weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The overall adequacy of the accommodation is better, and post-16 provision in particular is greatly improved. The rooms for teaching science and modern foreign languages are better grouped and the acoustics of the music rooms and design and technology workshop space have improved. Social areas have been introduced in each block and congestion, as pupils move between lessons, has been eased by a one-way system on stairways.

81. The school is well served by an excellent, spacious and well managed learning resource centre, with good information technology facilities for pupils to research via CD-ROMs, the Internet and the intranet link with schools locally and internationally. Access hours are generous. Some departments, such as history, music and English, use the resource well on a timetabled basis. Career information and staff development materials are well provided. Book stocks are better than average for a school of this size, and include material to reflect cultural diversity. Pupil loans are monitored. Staff are consulted over the selection of material. This is a popular and busy venue for lunchtime and post-school activity, attracting large numbers for a wide range of learning and leisure activities supported by student-helpers.

82. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and Successmaker provision is good, although full use of the facility is currently hindered by timetabling and staffing arrangements.

83. Resources for information technology are vastly improved since the previous inspection and the school now provides a technology-rich environment in the majority of subject areas. Specialist equipment includes computer-controlled lathes, sewing machines and music keyboards. There is appropriate software to support pupils with special needs in developing communication and literacy skills. Learning resources are good in the majority of subjects. There are inadequacies in resources for boys' physical education, some outdated material in geography and a paucity of contemporary learning materials for religious education. Some subjects, such as geography, music, mathematics, science, and design and technology enhance their resources with their own learning material, some of which has won national awards. In physical education, pupils are well supported with very good differentiated material at Key Stage 4. History, geography, art, physical education and modern languages make good use of external resources.

### **The efficiency of the school**

84. There is satisfactory overall efficiency in the school, but this judgement covers features which are great strengths and others where there are shortcomings.

85. On a day-to-day basis, school administration and financial control are very efficiently handled. Organisational matters are dealt with swiftly, communication within the school and with those outside is good, despite its large size. A reliable financial picture is readily available for the school as a whole and for the budgets of departments. Speed and courtesy characterise the way reception areas and all other clerical and administrative offices operate.

86. Longer-term financial planning and management is also good. The Headteacher, other senior managers and the bursar work effectively together and have given the school a development plan which is carefully costed, with funds supporting rather than dictating educational priorities. The school's unusually large budget surplus reflects several historic factors, including larger than average contingency funds to cover unpredictable costs and the fact that the local authority has rapidly moved to greater delegation of parts of its budget. In addition, the school has been very effective in attracting additional funding through its successful technology college status bids, by increased spending, especially on resources, and by more effective management of costs, particularly administration costs. Equally successful is the school's budget planning regarding the jointly funded and managed continuing education college, where early rapid expansion pushed up costs more rapidly than income. All the necessary steps were taken, as soon as the problem revealed itself, to maintain broad education provision while achieving a balanced budget. These imbalances, which originated prior to the appointment of the current head and bursar, have been very effectively tackled.

87. Learning resources and accommodation are used satisfactorily overall. Books, videos, technology equipment, and consumable resources are all used well by departments, in art, for example, and few rooms are under-used.

ICT is an important exception in that the relatively recent arrival of large amounts of hardware and software has yet to be matched with fully effective systems to use these resources; several rooms with impressive resources are used in far too few lessons over a week and the arrangements for access and teaching in the room housing Successmaker inhibit optimum use. There is also too little use of artefacts in religious education teaching. In contrast, the welcoming and well-equipped library is very effectively used by groups and individuals throughout the week.

88.The timetabling of teaching staff is currently unsatisfactory. While it partly reflects an adjustment to the loss of five staff very late in the previous school year, its impact is unhelpful. Timetabling deploys teachers across a two-week cycle, so that in several subjects there is a fortnight's gap between lessons and poor continuity in learning as a result. This is noticeable in design and technology, modern languages, physical education and religious education provision, and is particularly serious in Year 9 music, which already has a limited time allocation compared with other subjects. Staff are also deployed so that the same pupil group frequently has several teachers. This hinders progress through weakening consistency in approach, continuity of coverage and requiring pupils to establish good working relationships with far too many staff. Some Year 7 pupils, for example, are taught by up to 20 teachers. In some instances, in physical education, for example, double periods are taken by two different teachers, with pupils left midway through a session awaiting the arrival of the second teacher. For many staff, there is also the problem of non-contact time being very unevenly distributed by such timetabling, and the constant switching from shortage to surfeit of time for marking and administration does not promote efficiency.

89.However, overall value for money in the school is good. The school receives pupils with prior attainment well below the national average, and makes satisfactory added value in both key stages and the sixth form. Management and teaching are both strong and the school has set in place procedures which are already improving the progress that pupils make. While spending is higher than average, this reflects prudent rather than profligate financial management.

### **Sixth form**

90.Post-16 provision in the school is an area of many strengths. Since the last inspection, a new block has opened, offering very extensive facilities on the school site for both students aged 16 to 19 and for adults involved in continuing education.

91.Provision for the sixth form is very good. The large number of subjects on offer, incorporating about 20 subjects at A/AS level and additional intermediate or advanced level vocational courses, is complemented by an impressive range of extracurricular opportunities and experiences. The school is rightly proud of meeting its aim of raising the aspirations of the full ability range represented in the sixth form. There are, for example, many Oxbridge successes and the equally impressive achievement of students whose previous academic record had been less distinguished. The school is also proud of its flexibility, for example, in welcoming back a young man on to A level courses who had left school some three or four years previously, and who will enter university in the autumn. The additional facilities available in the excellent new centre are encouraging at least a quarter of sixth form students to take additional courses through further education programmes, held between 5 and 9 pm. For example, some A level art students enrol for classes in fashion design; others have embarked on the new distance learning electronics A level which is held after school and is also attended by adult learners. Adult learners are welcome to enrol in daytime advanced classes, although currently few are able to attend over the ten-day timetable. One group of students interested in law have recently been successful in winning the regional final of a mock trial competition run by the Bar Society.

92.Attainment is at least satisfactory in the majority of A level and GNVQ courses, with some examples of good and very good attainment compared with national averages for advanced programmes of study. Completion rates for full awards in GNVQs are also well above national averages. Numbers studying some non-National Curriculum subjects at A level are very small, making national comparisons unrepresentative, but achievements in 1999 in A level Russian, environmental science and design technology, as well as GNVQ intermediate art and design, for example, are well above average. Most other subjects achieve results at least comparable with national expectations with standards continuing to improve over time.

93.A well-managed programme of GNVQ courses is available to students, offering clear progression routes from part 1 in Key Stage 4 through to full courses at intermediate and advanced levels in the sixth form. The options within Key Stage 4 are business and manufacturing, and for sixth form students, GNVQ courses are

running in business, engineering, health and social care, ICT and leisure and tourism. Attainment in each of these areas is never less than satisfactory, with completion rates above national averages, and many candidates achieving good results in the most recent examinations and in previous years. Over all subjects in the most recent examinations, students on advanced GNVQ programmes scored 0.5 less average points than those on GCE A level courses, with the performance of girls better than that of boys.

94. Present attainment standards are at least satisfactory in all areas, with good features. Courses are attracting increasing numbers of students. Students acquire very good planning and research skills and present their portfolio work to a high standard and to course deadlines. Students at all stages of study demonstrate good understanding of their specialist vocational areas, acquiring knowledge at a depth appropriate to the level of study. They work well individually or collaboratively, have excellent relationships with their teachers, and benefit from strong links with local companies through work experience placements and individual or group research activities. Presentational skills are impressive. Students clearly enjoy their courses, and benefit from excellent suites of rooms in the new block. Relationships are excellent; students and teachers show mutual respect and humour, enjoyment and tangible progress are features of all lessons.

95. Teaching standards on vocational courses are good, and frequently very good; 80 per cent of lessons observed were better than satisfactory. The large team of staff who are involved in the five vocational subject areas are well managed, assessment standards are consistent and staff development well coordinated, with at least 35 teachers holding appropriate assessor and/or verifier awards. Key skills are delivered effectively through the vocational areas, with additional involvement of other specialists. Teachers' capability with ICT is very good, and their students are encouraged to make good use of relevant software as well as the Internet. However, the present arrangement whereby Year 12 GNVQ advanced students' contact time with their teachers has been reduced is likely to have an adverse effect on future attainment.

96. Provision for students' social and cultural enrichment is very good. Students participate in a broad mixture of social and cultural activities. For example, the formal Christmas dinner and disco is popular with staff as well as students, and all the engineering students from the school recently attended a local convention. About a quarter of sixth formers are involved in peer tutoring of younger pupils, and there is an active student committee made up of six representatives from each of Years 12 and 13 which organises numerous events, and helps to maintain standards in the use of the common room as well as raise funds for charity, or organise parties. Committee membership is seen as a most worthwhile opportunity. The enrichment programme, accredited by Liverpool University, provides wide-ranging opportunities for students to experience social, cultural and work-related activities, and the many links with the local community incorporated into GNVQ programmes of study provide further examples of involvement for example with the elderly or pre-school groups.

97. Many past students continue their links with the school, returning by invitation to talk to present students or younger pupils about their higher education or work experiences, formally and informally. There are excellent displays of photographs of past students' activities and news of students' achievements and activities are celebrated in school newsletters and prospectuses.

98. Post-16 provision is well managed, with the head of college and the post-19 director working effectively together. Students are monitored well and added-value analysis is used to assess progress. In the past, the A and AS courses have produced variable and overall low grade averages, but marked improvement has taken place recently, with the average points score reaching 15.5 in 1999. Stringent monitoring of progress through target-setting is being introduced across the school as a whole and has potential benefits for post-16 students.

## 105. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

### 105. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

#### 105. English

99. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is well below average. This reflects the collective evidence of test results and the work of pupils observed during the inspection. Some pupils are working at Levels 6 and 7, but many are below Level 5. High-attaining pupils write accurately, using paragraphs for effect and write convincing dialogue, well punctuated. They write in a variety of styles and sustain ideas successfully. They understand how Lady Macbeth's character develops and can select quotations to support their ideas. Average pupils speak reasonably clearly, using appropriate vocabulary. They write in simple sentences, spelling basic words correctly. They understand the events and the relationships between characters in their novels. Low-attaining pupils have a limited vocabulary, but see the differences in language between modern and pre-twentieth century writing, though they have difficulties reading the stories unaided. They make basic spelling errors and need a lot of help in structuring their writing. In the standard assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, results were below the average for all schools, with 52 per cent of pupils gaining Level 5 and above. This is in line with results from similar schools, better than results in science, but not as quite as good as results in mathematics. Results have gone up from 1997, but the rise was not sustained in 1999. Teacher assessments are usually in line with test results but were below them in 1998.

100. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. Several pupils do attain the highest grades. High-attaining pupils can analyse the language and structure of Ted Hughes' poetry confidently. They were observed presenting their findings clearly to the rest of the group, using appropriate technical language. In their writing, they compared perceptively the techniques used by Dickens and James in 'Great Expectations', and 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'. Average pupils collaborate well together in groups, extending others' ideas and moderating their own views. They are less confident in expressing their findings to the class. They understood how Ted Hughes uses language for effect and used technical terms such as personification and simile accurately. They are better at speaking and listening, and at responding to literature, than at writing. They make spelling and punctuation errors when writing, and do not always express themselves clearly, but produce lively autobiographies. Low-attaining pupils have difficulty expressing their ideas. Boys are better at speaking than girls, and girls express themselves more accurately on paper. They sustain their ideas, but expression is simple and sentence structure repetitive. They understood the meaning of Simon Armitage's poetry, but needed a lot of help to appreciate his imagery. They find it difficult to read more unusual words accurately. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1998, results were below the national average, with 43 per cent gaining grades A\* to C in English and 40 per cent gaining A\* to C in English literature. About 25 pupils did not sit the examinations, but of those who did, almost all gained grades A\* to G. Pupils, especially girls, did better in English than in their other subjects. Results have gone up since 1997. In 1999, results in English went down by ten per cent, but went up by ten per cent in English literature.

101. Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure and use the library regularly for fiction and for research. They draft and redraft to improve presentation. Computers are regularly used to present work, and newspaper articles and brochures are beautifully produced.

102. Standards in the sixth form are above average. Discussion is at a high level, with confident knowledge of set texts and use of technical terms such as sibilance, onomatopoeia, and catharsis. Students work independently, confidently developing their own responses. High-attaining students write sophisticated, mature analyses of such diverse texts as 'Talking Heads' and Hardy's poetry. Average students develop their responses well and have an overview of the texts. In the A level examinations in 1998, results were average, but in 1997 and 1999 they were above average, with a high proportion of students gaining grades A and B. At all three key stages, girls' performance is better than that of boys.

103. Taking into account the very low levels of attainment on entry, pupils make good progress at Kenton School. Progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Vocabulary develops, as does the ability to write at length. Pupils write for a variety of audiences and purposes and learn to adapt their language accordingly. Speaking and listening become more confident and pupils' ability to collaborate develops well. Literacy skills are still poorly developed amongst low attainers, but they can sort out

their ideas more coherently, and reading improves. In some lessons, where teaching is very good, progress is very good. For example, a Year 10 class developed understanding of the way John Proctor's complex behaviour in 'The Crucible' can be interpreted in several ways. In a very carefully structured lesson, where pupils moved from reading 'Lamb to the Slaughter' to analysing the story in groups, with a very close focus for each group, progress was very good, and motivation so high that pupils were unwilling to stop work. Absence hinders progress in some cases at both key stages, and pupils have to spend time catching up on what they have missed instead of moving forward. There is no difference in the progress of boys and girls nor in that of different groups. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards their targets. They make good progress when present in the lessons, but many are absent. Progress in the sixth form is good. Students gain greater confidence both in written and spoken work, studying a wide range of texts.

104. Pupils' response is good and is very good in the sixth form. Pupils are well behaved and friendly and display a good sense of humour. They join in lessons, at worst with acceptance and at best with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Relationships with their peers and with teachers are good, and pupils work well together in pairs and small groups, helping and supporting each other.

105. Teaching is good. A substantial proportion is satisfactory and a substantial proportion very good and excellent. None is unsatisfactory. Teachers are highly conscientious and very knowledgeable. In the best lessons, expectations are high and pupils encouraged to develop their own ideas. Methods and resources are varied, ranging from whole-class teaching, with effective use of the overhead projector, to stimulating mixed gender group work, to sixth form visits to the theatre. Teachers use question and answer skilfully to assess and develop understanding. Where teaching is less effective, the pace is too leisurely or management of pupils less tight. Assessment is good, with thorough marking clearly showing strengths and weaknesses, and pupils and teachers aware of targets.

106. The curriculum is wide and varied, though drama is insufficiently used and opportunities to develop pupils' spelling are not taken up regularly. At Key Stage 4, too much time is taken developing course work, and although pupils are prepared for examinations this is not sufficiently progressive over the whole course.

107. The commitment of the department, inspired by very good leadership, is obvious from the stimulating display in classrooms and the way teachers develop the schemes of work into interesting, motivating lessons.

108. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. All the weaknesses mentioned, such as work being heavily teacher directed, have been much improved, and teaching has moved from satisfactory to good. Standards had declined after the deterioration of levels of literacy on entry, but are now rising again.

## **Literacy**

109. Standards of literacy across the curriculum as a whole are below average. Pupils enter the school with literacy levels well below average which improve as they progress through the school. They speak clearly and ask questions confidently. They like reading and can understand the texts used in lessons. They write sufficiently accurately to communicate meaning but spelling is weak. A whole-school approach is being developed to raise standards, and all subjects have a representative on the literacy management group, but there is much still to be done. All Year 7 pupils are involved in two hours literacy teaching per fortnight, with a structured, detailed scheme of work. It is too early to judge what progress is being made as yet, but standards of teaching are variable, ranging from good to unsatisfactory.

110. In most areas of the curriculum, teachers are aware of the value of developing pupils' competency in literacy and subject specific words are prominently displayed, but spelling patterns are not taught. There are dictionaries in most rooms and sometimes pupils are encouraged to use them. Opportunities for developing ideas through group discussion are a strength in some areas, for example, geography, but are missed in others, for example, art. Similarly, opportunities for developing reading and sustained writing are not always identified.

## Mathematics

111. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is below average. The 1998 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 showed the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was well below the national average and the percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 or above was well below the national average. Results were average when compared to those for pupils from similar schools. Since the last inspection, results have remained well below the national average. However, the 1999 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 indicate an improving trend, closing on the national average. This is supported by attainment in lessons and by teachers' assessment. By the end of Year 9, high-attaining pupils work to levels above national expectations. They are able to factorise quadratic expressions, use direct and inverse proportions and find solution sets from a series of inequalities. Most pupils work successfully with frequency graphs, can calculate angles within various shapes and manipulate directed numbers using the four rules. Low-attaining pupils demonstrate ability in the production of bar charts from tables of data. They can plot simple shapes using coordinates in all four quadrants and understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. Algebraic skills are very weak in this group of pupils.

112. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is below average. In 1998, GCSE results were below average for grades A\* to C and have been below average in each year since the previous inspection. Results for A\* to G grades have been close to the national average. In 1999, GCSE examinations, the percentage successful at grades A\* to C was 36 per cent and the percentage achieving A\* to G was above the national average. The ability levels of each group of pupils in the past three years has been variable, but pupils' achievement has remained above the predicted levels for their ability group, producing seven per cent more grades in the A\* to C band. Pupils in Year 11 work at levels appropriate to their ability. Some high-attaining pupils successfully take GCSE examinations in Year 10 and continue to study for AS qualifications in Year 11. Average-attaining pupils use basic trigonometry in two dimensions, have good graphical skills and are able to plot and sketch graphs of quadratic equations and calculate areas and volumes of compound figures. Many low-attaining pupils achieve GCSE grades at foundation level, while some successfully study for the Certificate of Achievement. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls when comparing mathematics to their other subjects.

113. At the end of the sixth form, attainment is above average. The percentage of students achieving A or B grades is less than the national average, but the average point score for 1999 examinations was well above the national average. The small numbers taking the examinations make statistical comparisons uncertain. Year 12 students are successful in developing their understanding of pure mathematics and the content of their option units, either statistics or mechanics. In lessons observed, Year 13 students worked successfully on significance testing of coefficients of correlation in their statistics option and those following the mechanics option were proficient in calculating results of collisions of elastic objects.

114. Progress in Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is generally well below average in mathematics, yet is now close to the national average at the end of Year 9. Pupils are set after the first half-term to match teaching more closely to pupils' ability. However, setting takes place in three equal population groups across the year group, which has led to dilutions of ability levels in top sets and large classes containing low-attaining pupils. This has adversely affected the potential for appropriate progress to be made within these sets, and overall, it prevents good long-term progress from becoming very good or excellent. Progress is good during lessons, and often very good, as seen in a Year 7 lesson, gathering data on heights, in which pupils collected data, produced tally and bar charts and were able to identify the range and modal group for the data. By Year 9, high-attaining pupils make good progress, working above national expectations. During a lesson on statistics, they developed their ability to calculate estimated means from grouped data using mid-values and correct mathematical notation.

115. Progress for all pupils is good at Key Stage 4. Some high-attaining pupils successfully take the higher-level examination at the end of Year 10 and then study A level work in Year 11. Pupils from the express stream in Year 11 successfully found the centres of mass for various compound shapes when working toward their AS qualification. Average and higher-attaining pupils work towards the higher and intermediate level GCSE examination, covering topics to a level above national expectations, including trigonometry in compound shapes. In lessons, the average-attaining pupils make good progress towards their target examination. One lesson showed pupils working successfully on probability. Overall, pupils make best progress in handling shape and graphical work.

116. In both key stages, low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make equally good progress as their peers in each key stage, producing work at an appropriate level. This was seen in a Year 9 class whose numeracy was weak. Understanding of fractions was developed to enable them to present statements involving fractions in a variety of ways.

117. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the mathematics department takes responsibility for delivering elements of the ICT programme in Key Stage 3.

118. Pupils' attitude to their work is good at both key stages, creating an effective learning atmosphere. Pupils cooperate readily with staff and one another when working in groups or pairs. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson, when pupils were collecting data on heights by measuring one another. Presentation in pupils' books is neat and tidy, reflecting a positive attitude to the subject. Pupils bring equipment to lessons and use their own and the school's materials with care.

119. Teaching in both key stages is very good. All lessons observed had teaching which was good or better, and in 69 per cent, it was very good. Teachers are suitably qualified and have very good subject knowledge. Good organisation, very high expectations of pupil behaviour and a respect for the individual helps maintain good discipline. Prolonged interest and application from pupils is maintained by careful planning of lessons which contain a variety of activities and the individual enthusiasm of the teachers. Teachers focus on the concepts to be learned and demonstrate understanding of the needs of the pupils. Assessment is ongoing during lessons and is thorough and developmental. Homework is used very well to consolidate learning or to allow pupils to prepare data for use in following lessons.

120. The head of department gives strong, supportive leadership in moving the department forward to meet the challenges of change and improvement. The ethos within the department is one of professional debate and a wish to improve standards for all pupils. Strategies for improving the quality of teaching and learning have been introduced, with all staff contributing to the development of standards. There is a comprehensive departmental development plan linked to that of the school. Teachers have their own rooms in the dedicated mathematics suite, which are well decorated with stimulating posters and pupils' work. This enables good access to resources and a rich learning atmosphere. A very effective assessment system is in place, linked to the whole-school database. It facilitates pupil tracking and attainment prediction and also provides opportunity for pupils to be identified for learning intervention and target-setting. The department provides many out-of-hours support lessons in response to pupils' needs.

121. Since the last inspection, National Curriculum tests in Year 9 indicate an improving trend, closing on the national average. Mutual lesson observations and variation in teaching styles have improved the learning of pupils. There has been a change of examination board and a restocking of textbooks to match more closely the syllabuses followed.

## **Numeracy**

122. The mathematics department recognises its major role in developing these skills and has already liaised with the geography and science departments to develop pupils' techniques in advance of their use in these departments. Other subjects use, or make significant contributions to, the numeracy skills of pupils. In geography and history, pupils collect and tabulate data and use graphs to demonstrate differing forms of information. Pupils' proficiency increases as they progress through the school. In Key Stage 4 and beyond, they use computers to produce effective charts and tables. Much use is made of statistical presentation when reporting findings of surveys in GNVQ and design and technology courses. In design and technology subjects, pupils successfully use a variety of measurements, scale drawing and proportion. Scale drawing and measurement are also features of work in the art department. Spreadsheets in ICT make use of a variety of subject data in producing tables and graphs. Pupils also use equations within cells of spreadsheets to sum and average numbers. In science, pupils display adequate basic number skills and graph work. They meet a variety of different units, but opportunities to develop new skills are not exploited. Little numeracy work is evident in other subject areas and opportunities are missed in several areas to enrich pupils' work with relevant analyses and statistical presentations. There is no whole-school numeracy policy and a process of consultation has begun in order to develop further departmental contributions to the numeracy of pupils.



## Science

123. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in science is well below the national average and below the standards expected of pupils with similar backgrounds. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in National Curriculum assessments in 1998 was 39 per cent, compared with 56 per cent nationally; the school's results were also below average when compared with similar schools. At the levels expected of higher-attaining pupils, that is Level 6 and above, the results were well below the average for all schools nationally as well as for similar schools. In 1999, the standards attained were slightly below those of 1998. Over the last three years for which full data is available, the average attainment by pupils falls well below the national figure. This level of attainment is in part due to unsatisfactory attendance: in 1999, ten per cent of pupils were absent for the science tests and therefore registered zero marks. The standards of work being achieved by the pupils observed in class were variable, and this reflects too little consistency in the quality of teaching. In some classes, for example, pupils are achieving standards which are appropriate to their levels of attainment. For instance, higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 achieved a good understanding of the formation of fossil fuels and wrote up accurate, detailed notes, and in a lower-attaining set, Year 7 pupils successfully completed a practical exercise involving filtration and evaporation and could confidently explain the purpose of each technique. However, it is also common to find teaching groups attaining at too low a level, partly as a result of low expectations. For example, a class in Year 8 could not distinguish between electricity and magnetism and pupils were unable to write up a description of an electric bell. Moreover, in all years in this key stage, some pupils have exercise books containing coherent and detailed records of work undertaken, while many have books which contain very few completed sections of work.

124. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also well below both the national averages and that of similar schools and standards over the last three years have shown a gradual decline. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades at GCSE in 1998 was only 22 per cent, compared with 47 per cent nationally, and in 1999, the school figure was only 20 per cent. The proportion of pupils failing to achieve any GCSE grade in science was also worse than the national average. Attainment in lessons observed during this inspection varied a great deal. In some lessons, the standards of pupils' work matched expectations, based on their levels of attainment. For example, Year 11 higher attainers clearly understood the theoretical basis of fractional distillation and appreciated its economic importance; pupils in a slightly lower set could recall accurately work previously undertaken on homeostasis. However, in far too many classes, pupils were not attaining appropriate standards. This was often true in Year 11, but it also occurred in Year 10, where, for example, pupils in a relatively high set were unable to recognise how to control the angle of release in an investigation into the physics of the pendulum.

125. Post-16 students taking A level sciences achieve standards which are below national averages. In 1998 and 1999, very few candidates obtained grades A or B. However, attainment is generally in line with the standards shown by the same students in Key Stage 4, and occasionally it is better. Students were observed successfully tackling a range of advanced work, including investigating the effect of caffeine on the pulse rate of a small invertebrate animal, calculations based on the half-life of radioactive elements and interpreting diagrams based on electron microscopy. All the work in students' files is set at the level required for the higher grades.

126. Overall, progress across Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Throughout Years 7 to 9, pupils are taught biology, physics and chemistry by separate teachers. During the early years, this arrangement is resulting in poor coverage of the syllabus, needless repetition of some aspects of science and making teachers spend too much time recapping previous lessons before moving on to new work. It also extends the time which teachers need to recognise each pupil's potential in order to ensure that all are suitably extended. A top set in Year 8 was unable to complete well-planned work on the functions of blood cells because most of the lesson had to be devoted to refreshing the pupils' recall of the previous lesson. The exercise books for Year 7 contain disturbingly small amounts of work. By Year 9, most classes are making satisfactory or good progress and pupils are acquiring knowledge, understanding and practical skill at rates appropriate to their attainment. For example, in one lesson a class of lower-attaining pupils rapidly completed and recorded several small experiments showing energy transformation.

127. Taken as a whole, progress at Key Stage 4 is also unsatisfactory. Incomplete coverage of work at Key Stage 3 affects progress at Key Stage 4, where time has to be spent rectifying gaps in pupils' knowledge. Poor planning and failure to match work to pupils' level of attainment also have a negative effect on progress. In one lesson, a group of Year 10 pupils almost all failed to complete an exercise in determining the pH of common liquids, even though the level of difficulty was only marginally greater than that posed at Key Stage 3. In some

classes, very good teaching is overcoming the difficulties and resulting in good progress. In a lesson taken at great pace, pupils successfully completed an experiment on rates of cooling, wrote up the work including graphs of the results and still had time to discuss the significance of their findings. Progress made by students following A level courses is good.

128. Most pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 approach the learning of science positively, work hard in class and have a good attitude towards homework. A significant proportion, lacking maturity and self control, have great difficulties in concentrating and require much encouragement to sustain their efforts for the duration of a lesson. Progress by these pupils is dependent on very good teaching.

129. In Key Stages 3 and 4, the quality of teaching is very varied and unsatisfactory overall; very good teaching is countered by too much which has shortcomings. Of the lessons seen, over two-thirds had teaching which was good and of that, one-third was very good. However, in nearly one lesson in five, teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. Teaching in the sixth form has greater consistency and is good in quality. Across Years 7 to 11, some instances of unsatisfactory teaching are due to the failure to establish good working relationships within the classroom, resulting in poor discipline. More frequently, it is due to unimaginative and careless planning. Teachers too often demonstrate experiments instead of organising a class practical and some of the handwritten worksheets are close to illegible and used with classes for which they were not originally intended. Good teaching is characterised by thoughtful planning that combines exciting practical work with well-designed printed material which make realistic demands of pupils' literacy and mathematical skills. Day-to-day monitoring of progress is also inconsistent. Some teachers mark pupils' books regularly, identify errors constructively and celebrate success. This is done well in the sixth form and satisfactorily in Key Stage 4. Other staff give scant attention to this aspect of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 3.

130. Recent uncertainty and change in the management structure of the department have contributed to the current low standards of attainment, but these problems are now being resolved. Since the appointment in 1998 of a new head of department, several initiatives have been undertaken that should in time raise the quality of science education in the school. Completely new and detailed schemes of work for both key stages have been written and as they are fully resourced and introduced, will improve the planning of all lessons. Long-term progress is now being measured by half-termly tests based firmly on National Curriculum levels of attainment. As this data accumulates it should provide a powerful instrument for monitoring both pupil progress and the effectiveness of teaching. Weaknesses in the middle management structure of this very large department are also being addressed. It is now increasingly possible for teachers to work together as teams responsible for different aspects of science education. However, there remain areas which still lack coordination. Those aspects of the school's cross-curricular approach to ICT, which are the responsibility of the science department, are not being properly taught. Poor accommodation for both teaching and the preparation of materials for experimental work have a deleterious effect on the quality of science education provided. Many of the newer laboratories are too small and lack sufficient services to allow a normal-sized class to do a full range of practical work. The older laboratories, although larger, are in a very poor state of repair, decor and cleanliness. Despite the valiant efforts of several teachers, who organise excellent displays of pupils' work, these rooms do not provide a good working environment. The lack of centralised space for preparation of materials and administration of the department makes efficient management of the very good technical support difficult and seriously limits the extent to which teachers can share good practice and support each other.

131. Since the last inspection, the department has experienced a series of difficulties in both staffing and management which have resulted in declining standards. Recent appointments and revision of management structures are now allowing the department to tackle many of the shortcomings.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Information and communications technology**

132. The attainment of pupils in information and communications technology (ICT) at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average. Seventy per cent of pupils at this school gain Level 5 and above, which is far higher than the national figure of 59 per cent. However, teacher assessment and pupils' attainment in lessons do not match, as some aspects are missing and there is insufficient evidence in pupils' classwork books across other subjects to support the judgements. ICT is not taught as a discrete subject, and skills and knowledge are expected to be gained in separate modules through other subjects. No pupils in the key stage have files showing ICT work.

133.By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils know how to log on to the network, call up software, print and save work. Most pupils control the mouse effectively and know that menus can alter screens or begin other operations. They can use the word processor to write and change emphasis, size and style of letters and most know how to mark text before alterations. Some pupils make their work more attractive to the reader by presenting it in desk-top publishing format by making columns, adding pictures or inserting scanned images. Most pupils can find information from a CD-ROM and the Internet. A few pupils understand how to use a digital camera, but they are less sure of how to load the results into the computer. Pupils have few opportunities to use a database, create graphs or screen art. Work on the modelling, monitoring and control strand is weak, as pupils hardly ever monitor changes over time or use sensors. Pupils sometimes control a screen robot in mathematics lessons, but overall knowledge of programming real robots is limited. Some pupils make electronically controlled models in design and technology lessons and gain a basic understanding of control.

134.By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment overall is still below the national average. Until last year, no pupils in Year 11 took external examinations in the subject. Results in the 1999 GNVQ intermediate ICT examinations were well below expectations. While 12 candidates attempted the examination, there were no distinctions or merits, only seven pass grades and five part awards. As pupils have few lessons in ICT during their first three years at the school, they have an insufficient knowledge base and find the rigour of an examination course very difficult. Pupils use the computers, but, without regular access, many forget how to do simple operations which should have been mastered well before the start of Year 10, do not develop sound keyboard skills and are not producing the volume of work at the standard required. Some pupils do not use the computers at all to present work in other subjects. During lessons devoted to the teaching of ICT, attainment is sound in the tasks, but often these are at a low level of skill. Highest attainment is normally from pupils who are adventurous in exploration and have computers at home. Many pupils can look at and add records to existing databases and can do simple alphanumeric sorting, but most need help in framing questions to gain results. Many pupils cannot create graphs unaided. Pupils use spreadsheets, but many pupils, including those with limited number skills, cannot work out formulae to calculate results in cells, and very few understand how they work. Pupils generally know how to call up information from CD-ROMs or the Internet but find it very slow as they are insufficiently skilled at sifting out what is useful or otherwise. Apart from reading the results, many pupils do not always know how else to use the information gained. Work on the controlling, monitoring and measuring strand is poor.

135.Until the academic year 1998-99 there were no courses in ICT for students in the sixth form. The attainment of students in Year 12 is mainly in line with the national average and is well above for a few individuals. Students taking GNVQ advanced and intermediate level courses have well-developed analytical skills. They attain satisfactory standards on the basics of word processing, use of data, page layout, and graphics. Students use databases and spreadsheets where appropriate to supplement their theory work. They know and understand about the workings of a computer, can build the hardware, configure a system and load the software on to the hard disk. Higher-attaining students can work out solutions in calculations and programming, and spot errors in their work, but some are insufficiently skilled in analysis and do not present well-argued dissertations. Students generally produce full files of work, and in lessons, most answering and questioning is good. Many sixth formers, in addition to those taking GNVQ courses, make good use of the library and sixth form centre facilities for research in other subjects.

136.Although most departmental documents include indications where ICT is to be used, there is insufficient evidence to show that all departments are actually contributing their agreed contribution to ICT provision. The business education, English, geography and special needs departments use the equipment often. Others, such as design and technology, history, mathematics, modern languages and music, allow the pupils to use the equipment for short modules of work or when appropriate to do so. In all, there are too few lessons where pupils can build on to previous knowledge or learn new skills. Not all departments have their own software and computers. Basic work is often insufficiently demanding. There are some instances of good practice, for instance, during the inspection, pupils in Year 8 worked hard on reporting information heard on a tape recording and used a newspaper format to print their findings. Another group of Year 7 pupils in science enjoyed working with software which simulated circuit-making on screen and testing their results.

137.Although in lessons progress is at least satisfactory and often good, overall progress across both Key Stages 3 and 4 is unsatisfactory. Pupils enter school with differing experiences of using computers and most pupils in Year 7 make good progress in learning how to log on to the network and call up the software. Progress on using them is limited because pupils have insufficient time in short modules to further their basic ICT skills. They build up only a superficial knowledge and understanding in the subject. Many pupils develop a reasonable

keyboard speed but a few pupils only use one hand when keying in information, which reduces the amount of work they do in lessons. During the inspection, in two English lessons, a group of pupils in Year 8 used their ingenuity to create a set of three-fold colour brochures about animal rights. Progress was very good because researching the work was interesting and the format presented a good challenge. Pupils had to adjust their language to the intended audience and the columns had to be created in the right order. The topic also made a good contribution to pupils' moral education. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they use the specially selected range of programs on numeracy and literacy, which have clearly defined sections and targets. Progress in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory as there are too few lessons where ICT is used and too little evidence to suggest that pupils are producing the amount of work required at appropriate standards. Progress is very good in the sixth form. Much of the work is new to the students, who make good progress, especially in knowledge of the computer systems and in programming. Most pupils who have their own computers at home make the greatest amount of progress in communicating and handling information.

138.The response to ICT is good throughout the school. Most pupils show a positive attitude to work. Pupils generally listen attentively at the beginning of lessons, are anxious to get to the computers, concentrate well and try hard. Some pupils show remarkable perseverance when trying to do new operations and refine their work. Behaviour is good. Pupils are careful when using the computers and know they should not tamper with the machines, alter others' passwords or access unsuitable information. Relationships are very good. When they have to work in pairs, most pupils collaborate amicably, share the tasks, discuss the problems, pool ideas and make joint decisions, but a significant minority allow the more confident or dominant partner to do all the work. During a science lesson, students in the sixth form confidently and capably assisted some young pupils in Year 7, shared their skills and helped them to succeed. One very high-attaining student in Year 12 ably assisted the teacher in an advanced GNVQ lesson, explaining configuration of a system and DOS settings for installing peripherals. Other students gratefully accepted the advice, showing a mature attitude to work. Pupils like seeing their work on paper, but are disappointed with black and white copies. They are proud to show off their work and appreciate the credits they gain in ICT lessons. The higher-attaining pupils work well unaided, but a few lower attainers are very dependent on their teachers for help. Pupils with special educational needs concentrate very well when they use their own software.

139.There are too few lessons devoted to the subject in Key Stages 3 and 4 so that the quality of teaching overall is not satisfactory. In discrete ICT lessons, the quality is in fact good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. In eighteen lessons observed, it was very good in eight, good in four and satisfactory in the remainder. Many teachers lack confidence and need, but cannot have, technician support in every lesson. The teachers who use ICT to enhance classwork are familiar with it and know the software sufficiently well. They understand that pupils need the basics and try to help them to develop appropriate competence and gain knowledge, albeit in small bursts. Expectations are high in lessons for Years 7 and 8, as the work offers good challenge in, for instance, English and geography, but are too low in Year 9, where the work is often insufficiently demanding. Planning is good overall, as lessons are made interesting for the pupils and relate suitably to ongoing class work. Lessons usually proceed as intended. Teachers supply good quality support and resource sheets to help pupils to become more independent. During lessons one-to-one help is very good. Although some marking of books is good, especially in English, occasionally it fails to inform pupils how they should improve. Printed work is marked, but does not form part of any folder of assessed work. Teaching of ICT in GNVQ courses is very good. Teachers follow the course requirements and assessment is thorough.

140.Leadership is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is broad, but unbalanced, so it does not fully cover statutory requirements, as some elements are missing from the schemes of work, and some are not linked to the statements of attainment for ICT. Most pupils cannot develop adequate skills nor make sufficient progress in the subject, owing to the paucity of time allowed on the timetable. Many pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are not receiving their entitlement. Few subject teachers contribute to the overall ICT grades awarded at the end of Key Stage 3. Assessment practice and collation are not sufficiently accurate; pupils are often awarded inflated grades and only on a limited number of applications. The programme of staff training is good, but the school has yet to ensure that all teachers have acquired adequate expertise. The school is very well resourced with computers, and the research facilities in the library and in the sixth form block are good. There has not been an audit to discover what equipment pupils have at home, nor what they are actually capable of doing unaided. Pupils do not keep specific ICT files to prove competence.

141.The school has made good progress since the last report. The policy is clear and concise and the development plan is good. There has been an audit to define where subjects should contribute to ICT. Each department has a section in the handbook outlining intentions, but this is not always followed in practice. The

coordination of skills and competence of both teachers and pupils remain underdeveloped. The initiative to create links with local primary schools has been very effective in raising awareness and standards. Pupils use video conferencing facilities to speak to pupils in other schools. Pupils can now take external examination courses. There are now more and better computers spread through the campus and an effective system of network management. Technician support has increased, but levels are still insufficient to timetable support for non-specialists on many of the occasions when they would wish to use ICT. Attainment at both Key Stages 3 and 4 remains unsatisfactory.

## **Art**

142. At the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils attain in line with national expectations, with a few exceeding this standard. The proportion of pupils who gained grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1998 was significantly below the national average, with girls outperforming boys at the higher grades. 1999 results have dramatically reversed this position, with 58 per cent of candidates achieving grades A\* to C, which is very close to the national average. This is due to greater attention having been given to the precise requirements of the examination board, as well as to improved pupil monitoring. Girls continue to outperform boys. 1998 A level students' results at grade A and B were in line with the national average, and 1999 results maintained this standard. In 1998, all students achieved a pass in GNVQ intermediate art, with 1999 results showing a significant improvement, half the students gaining distinction and merit grades.

143. Using evidence from the inspection, as well as teacher assessments, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national standards. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of observational recording. They recognise the work of established artists and their styles and the art of other cultures which is regularly incorporated and developed in their practical work. They are good at using different media to record formal observational drawings and are able to work in the style of well-known artists. They record images accurately in line and tone from direct observation and create good-quality imaginative pictorial imagery. Their three-dimensional art is imaginative and produced with satisfactory craft skills. They use an appropriate art vocabulary, satisfactorily aided by the key words displayed in studios. Pupils do not have opportunities to reflect and formalise their thoughts about art in writing. Pupils with special educational needs attain below expectation at the end of this key stage, not receiving adequate attention within the very large group sizes. Pupils are not able to generate creative artwork using computers, although some use the Internet to research artists' work.

144. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is good. Pupils acquire and demonstrate skills, new techniques and understanding to a level comparable to expectations for their age. The subject is popular, attracting a very high number of pupils who show strong motivation. They are able to sustain a chosen study from conception to completion. The majority of work is taken to a completed stage. They develop good craft skills, such as shown in their exquisite large-scale ceramic fish. This is a direct result of regular good-quality teacher demonstration. Arts of other cultures are further developed as in their canopic Egyptian slabware. Discussion and writing about art is good, as is the use of a technical vocabulary in ceramics. Pupils with special educational needs show attainment comparable with the national expectations.

145. Attainment post-16 is very good in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional work. Students produce mature work of both breadth and depth, conveying feelings and meaning in two-dimensional imagery and sculptural forms. They show very good spatial concepts when working on large paper sculptures. They show great strength in formal graphic design work, producing artwork of a high calibre and verve, combining computer-generated text and digital camera work. Their large scale murals in the style of famous artists embellish the school. The students' ability to review regularly, modify and refine their work as it progresses is a strength that leads to very good accomplishment.

146. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Although they arrive at the school with varied levels of prior attainment, because of good liaison with primary schools, their experiences of art match the Key Stage 3 programme of study very well. In Year 7, they are introduced to a very wide range of visual and tactile experiences. They make good progress at Key Stage 3 and improve their craft and design skills equally in both two and three-dimensional artwork and in understanding of a range of artists' work. The work at Key Stage 3 provides a sound foundation for Key Stage 4, where pupils again make good progress, particularly when introduced to new media such as printmaking. Independent study skills develop well as pupils move through the school. Progress post-16 is very good and is notable for the significant gain in both skill and wider understanding and appreciation of art. Opportunities to visit galleries have stimulated pupils at Key Stage 4 and

5 to produce a wide range of impressive artwork. Pupils at most levels of attainment make good or very good progress, but those with special educational needs in Key Stage 3 lack sufficient support and make unsatisfactory progress.

147. Attitudes and behaviour are good. This is a direct result of the enthusiasm which teachers bring to their work and the high standards they set. Pupils respond well to the challenges in the work set for them. They organise themselves effectively, support each other, share ideas and show respect for each others' work. A small number of pupils, both boys and girls in Year 8, fail to apply themselves and make inadequate progress. The quantity and quality of coursework and homework generally reveals a very positive attitude to the subject.

148. All teaching is consistently good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and very good technical and craft skill which is evident in frequent practical demonstration to groups and individuals working in ceramics or printmaking. Lessons are brisk, well paced and use time well. Teachers are particularly good at motivating pupils, setting high expectations and enthusing pupils to produce imaginative visual ideas, such as when Key Stage 4 pupils explored tactile qualities of working with clay to construct small figurative forms, or when students were prompted to find imaginative and inventive solutions to visual problems. Pupils at Key Stages 4 and 5 are treated as independent artists and supported very well individually in developing their own ideas. Students in the sixth form have a mature working relationship with their teachers, valuing and responding well to the high-quality guidance they receive. Assessment is used effectively and the good practice of guided self-assessment raises pupil-awareness of what to do in order to progress. Marking and recording of attainment is done well, with useful comments provided to push pupils on still further. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils at all levels of attainment are given equal consideration in a caring and supportive environment. The learning environments are visually stimulating, with many rich examples of different media. This raises the spirit and when combined with the exceptionally extensive display of good-quality artwork around the school, promotes high standards.

149. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and the department has responded well to the last inspection. Drawing skills are now well developed, colour is used with growing sensitivity and learning is enhanced by more technical skills. All lessons now have clear objectives.

### **Design and technology**

150. In 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE A\* to C grades was below the national average. At grades A\* to G, results were broadly in line with those achieved nationally. Results were much improved in graphic products over those of 1998 and well above the national average; results in resistant materials and textiles were broadly in line but below in electronic products and food. The proportion of girls achieving grades A\* to C is significantly higher than that of boys. Overall, these results are higher than in 1998 and better than the results gained in many other subjects. In A level design and technology in 1999, all six students achieved a pass grade, one at grade D, two at C, two at B and one at A. This maintains the consistently high level of results achieved in previous years.

151. In the work seen during the inspection in Key Stage 3, attainment improves from a low baseline at the beginning of Year 7. At the end of key stage in 1999, teacher assessments show that pupil attainment for Level 5 and above were in line with the national averages, with the girls achieving better than the boys. These results are in line with those achieved in 1998. Current pupils attainment is being maintained at similar levels to those achieved in 1998 and 1999. Middle and higher-attaining pupils have satisfactory making skills in a range of materials, and their graphical skills are equally well developed. The girls' design skills are generally at higher levels than those of the boys. For lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, practical making skills are better developed than other aspects of the subject.

152. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below national expectations overall. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in the electronic products and graphic products courses were above the national average, with the food and textiles below, and resistant materials well below. Making skills are at least satisfactory in all the courses. Design skills are particularly good in the graphic products course where the pupils had analysed their research very effectively to refine and develop their design ideas. In all the courses, pupils use a range of drawing methods to communicate their design ideas and intentions, and use charts and graphs to display their findings from surveys and questionnaires. Subject knowledge is satisfactory on all courses and the technical vocabulary which underpins it is secure for the majority of middle and higher-attaining pupils. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs continue to have higher levels of attainment in making than

other aspects of the subject.

153. At the end of Year 13 attainment is above national averages. Design, making and graphical skills are all at satisfactory levels, especially in Year 13, and in the work seen during the inspection students demonstrated good, sometimes very good, subject knowledge including ergonomics, anthropometrics and the properties of materials, and they showed a good command of the processes of designing. Their design and practical making skills are of a high order and they produce well designed and made products.

154. In Key Stage 3, middle and higher-attaining pupils make good progress with all aspects of the subject. In Key Stage 4, progress overall is satisfactory. There is some variation between the courses followed, with the pupils in graphic products and electronic products making good progress. Good progress is made in both key stages by all pupils, with making skills in resistant materials, food and textiles, and with electronic components. They handle a wide range of tools, equipment, machines and materials with increasing accuracy and skill. Middle and higher-attaining pupils, particularly the girls, make satisfactory progress with their design skills. These are enhanced by the opportunities to disassemble and analyse existing products. Over time, pupils develop their understanding of research methods, analysis and idea development to meet the design brief and specification of the product to be produced. Progress with graphical skills is also satisfactory and pupils use isometric and orthographic projection, and perspective drawing to develop their ideas. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make much slower, but still satisfactory, progress with their design skills, subject knowledge and vocabulary, and use a more limited range of drawing techniques. In the sixth form progress is good in all aspects of the subject.

155. Pupils' attitudes throughout the school are good. They are interested in the tasks presented to them and they concentrate well. Behaviour is good and pupils cooperate effectively when working in pairs and groups. They listen well to each other and to their teachers' explanations and this has a positive impact on the progress made in lessons. Pupils treat resources, tools, equipment, machines and materials provided for their use with care, and have a good awareness of safety and hygiene matters.

156. Overall, teaching is good in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. It is always satisfactory, very often good and occasionally very good. In the sixth form, it is always good or very good. Teachers use effective strategies to engage the pupils with the task. For example, in a Year 10 food lesson, the pupils were learning about the importance of temperature control in food production. The teacher used a variety of teaching methods, including explanation, discussion, writing activity, individual support and the viewing of videotape. These changes of method ensured that the pupils' interest was sustained and gave pace to the lesson. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this contributes significantly to the quality of teaching, especially in their demonstrations and explanations. Good individual support is given to the pupils, often including accurate and informed feedback, which encourages them and raises their level of motivation. Classroom management and organisation are good and pupil routines are established. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The good practice of sharing the learning objectives with pupils is a consistent feature of the lessons, but few teachers had an end-of-lesson review. Also, the use of time deadlines for intermediate tasks in lessons was not always efficient. In food lessons, there is an over-reliance on the use of worksheets, which do not always provide appropriate levels of challenge and restrict the opportunities for the more able pupils.

157. The head of department gives a good, strong lead and departmental documentation is good. However, the dispersed distribution of teaching rooms makes communications between staff difficult. Structured meetings to ensure that good practice is shared are not held. In addition, there is insufficient formal monitoring of teaching and the curriculum to support the efforts to raise further standards of attainment. The curriculum meets requirements and gives good continuity and progression. The accommodation is satisfactory and the department has good facilities, including computer aided manufacturing. The technicians give good support to the staff and the delivery of the curriculum. The last inspection report did not raise any significant issues that needed to be addressed.

## Geography

158. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below the national average. In 1999, just 48 per cent of pupils were judged by the school to be achieving at or beyond Level 5. Pupils have developed a good awareness of social and environmental issues, but are less competent in basic mapping skills. For example, a class of low-attaining Year 8 pupils showed a good grasp of the environmental impact of ripping out hedgerows and of the advantages this would bring to farmers. Higher-attaining Year 8 pupils working in groups mapped different types of farming with mixed accuracy, but most failed to construct a key correctly. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. In 1998, 37 per cent of pupils gained grades A\* to C and 99 per cent gained grades A\* to G. These results were above the average of other subjects in the school, though well below national averages. There has been a fall in attainment over the last three years, and in 1999 just 30 per cent of pupils gaining grades A\* to C. Higher-attaining Year 11 pupils understand the processes of the hydrological cycle and use the terminology correctly. Attainment at A level is above the national average. In 1998, students achieved an average point score of 6.4 and in 1999 it was 7, with 50 per cent of students gaining grades A or B. These results were above the average of other subjects at A level in the school. Pass rates have been above the national average in four of the last five years. Year 13 students plot the tracks of tropical storms in the northern hemisphere accurately and in their descriptions of how the storms develop, they use terms such as inter tropical convergence zone, coriolis force and vortex correctly. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys in Key Stage 3, but by the end of Key Stage 4, this has been reversed.

159. Progress is satisfactory through Key Stage 3, good through Key Stage 4 and very good at A level. Pupils of average and higher attainment in Year 7 understand and use terms like pollution and erosion correctly. By Year 9, they understand the links between health, hygiene and water supply and recognise how much better off they are than people in economically developing countries. Higher-attaining Year 9 pupils are starting to make judgements on the relative merits of different ways of gathering information while completing field studies and they are able to assess the level to which they are working with fair accuracy. Pupils' individual GCSE studies reflect a knowledge and understanding of a much higher standard than the written work produced in Year 9 and often make very good use of ICT. Year 12 A level students displayed an improving grasp of the way factors that bring about poverty often inter-link to make the human situation increasingly acute. Pupils with special educational needs in Key Stages 3 and 4 make broadly satisfactory progress; while many lessons offer a suitable variety of tasks, there is rarely any in-class support.

160. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good and often very good at Key Stage 4, and very good in the sixth form. Older pupils often display a very good level of interest in their work, as do many younger pupils with learning difficulties. A significant number of pupils of average and lower ability, particularly boys in Years 8, 9 and 10, work reluctantly and often very slowly. Older and more able pupils collaborate well in pair and small group activities and mostly listen to and respect others' points of view. Pupils are well supported and many following examination courses become effective independent learners. A significant number of younger pupils, mostly boys, take insufficient pride in the appearance of their work and the condition of their exercise books. Other resources are looked after well on the whole.

161. Teaching is good overall in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. Teacher knowledge and understanding are good. Expectations are mostly very high for pupils following examination courses. They vary between very good and unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. An excellent range of teaching and learning styles is employed by some of the teachers, and these are never less than satisfactory. Pupils have very good opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and are given systematic, constructive guidance in the production of their individual studies. The management of pupils is often very good and good overall, with a firm but caring approach. There is considerable variation in the quality of day-to-day assessment. More often, this is sensitive, sharp and very responsive, but in a minority of classes, pupils' weaknesses and misunderstandings are not picked up.

162. The curriculum overall is very good. It is broad and balanced and has particular strengths in the well-structured arrangements for the acquisition and development of ICT skills and the wide range of effective links with the local community. The arrangements for assessment recording and reporting of pupils' work and progress are good and improving. Practices within the department are consistent and are guided by a clear and detailed policy. Standardising arrangements for Key Stage 3 levels of attainment are not fully effective. A comprehensive system for measuring progress and targeting specific learning objectives is developing; but the clear communication of particular learning objectives to individual pupils is not yet effective. The department is managed very effectively. This is aided by clear and comprehensive policy guidance and well-understood and



efficient systems.

163. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The curriculum has been enriched by the effective development of ICT and by the expansion of community links. There is more good and very good teaching and a wider range of teaching and learning styles are employed, particularly those that assist pupils to manage their own learning.

## **History**

164. In the GCSE results for 1998, the proportion of pupils who were awarded grades within the range of A\* to C was well below the national average. Results for 1999, however, indicate a marked improvement over those obtained in both 1997 and 1998. Strategies to sustain this improvement in the year 2000 include the use of revision notes and the arrangement of extra tuition sessions after school, targeted at those pupils whose current level of attainment is grade D. In the A level results for 1998, the proportion of pupils who were awarded grades A or B was well below the national average.

165. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. This is largely because pupils do not handle the analysis of information effectively. Pupils gain a satisfactory level of knowledge of the subject, which they present in a range of styles, including diagrams, illustrations and tabulations as well as written accounts, in their notebooks. Higher and average attainers are competent in their use of written sources of evidence to research topics and to gather information for answering set questions; lower attainers place a greater reliance on illustrative sources. All pupils have a concept of cause and effect relationship at a simple level. However, only some of the higher attainers demonstrate an understanding of the deeper, underlying causes of historical changes and patterns of development, and attainment in chronology is weaker in comparison to the other key elements of the National Curriculum.

166. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. Skills of source evaluation and of comparing sources for greater and lesser reliability are not sufficiently well developed, and these are required of candidates if they are to obtain the higher grades at GCSE. However, pupils are competent at extracting information from a range of sources, both primary and secondary. They are able to pursue their own investigations of topics. Pupils on both full and short courses attain at least a satisfactory level of GCSE coursework at a pleasing standard of literacy; a significant minority of pupils on both courses attain levels that are good or very good. Pupils following the full course enjoy a working knowledge of important terms and concepts and can explain their meaning.

167. Attainment in the sixth form is in line with the national average. Pupils can write discursive essays to A level standard and are fairly confident in expressing arguments both orally and in writing. They are able to access and collate information from disparate sources. They have a full appreciation that historical issues, problems and personalities need to be considered from differing and contrasting perspectives.

168. The level of progress that pupils make is satisfactory at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4; in the sixth form, progress is good. Imaginative writing and investigative skills are notably enhanced throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, note compilation and work organisational skills are considerably developed. Pupils with special educational needs who are withdrawn from lessons in Year 7 make good progress with regard to curricular objectives and to the targets prescribed in their individual education plans.

169. Pupils at all levels of prior attainment make a good response to the subject. They show a lively interest, behave well in class and sustain concentration to the end of the lesson. Sixth formers in particular display high levels of interest and motivation. Pupils develop their capacity for personal study as demonstrated by the high standard of some GCSE course work and by the independent research undertaken at A level, and they take an increasing share of responsibility for their learning as they move through the school. They also support each other when set to work in pairs or in groups, especially when using a computer. Relations between teachers and pupils are cordial and positive.

170. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, where some very good teaching was also seen. At Key Stage 4, teaching is satisfactory. All teachers enjoy a secure command of the subject at all levels. They manage pupils well and have high standards of discipline. Teaching methods are appropriately varied and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. The resources used match the needs of pupils at differing levels of attainment and stimulate learning. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils who were working from

parish register extracts for a district of Newcastle in the early nineteenth century gained a keen appreciation of the devastating effects of the outbreak of a cholera epidemic. Excellent displays on the walls of classrooms and corridors reward pupils for good work and provide extra incentive for their interest and effort in the subject.

171.A weakness in some of the teaching is a neglect of questioning to assess prior learning and to prompt further insight and understanding. Teachers sometimes give pupils information that could have been elicited from them with a skilful use of questioning. In addition, some of the marking of pupils' work, particularly at Key Stage 4, does not supply them consistently with the full guidance that they need to improve their standard of attainment.

172.Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and have several good features. The planning of the curriculum is thorough and fully complies with all statutory requirements. The half-termly assessments of pupils' work in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 allow both teachers and pupils to measure progress made towards the attainment of learning targets set at the beginning of the key stages. There is a very positive ethos incorporating good relationships and a commitment to high achievement. A minor weakness, however, is the absence of a discrete development plan drawing all aspects of planning together..

173.Since the previous inspection report, the needs of higher-attaining pupils have been given greater consideration. They are provided with regular opportunities to practise extended writing skills, often in an imaginative style. There is a wider range of teaching methods employed, including games and role-play exercises. Every class in Key Stage 3 is given experience ICT in history lessons, although there is very little evidence of its usage in pupils' notebooks.

### **Modern languages**

174.Attainment in modern languages is well below average at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. In GCSE examinations in 1998, the percentage of A\* to C grades in both French and German is well below national average and compares unfavourably with other subjects in school. Over the last four years, GCSE results have fluctuated. They improved from 1998 to 1999, but overall they remain well below average. In the sixth form, attainment is average for the A level courses. Results in French and German in the A Level examinations over the past two years for small numbers of entries are average. For Russian, which is not now taught in the school, results at both GCSE and A level were well above average for the small number of candidates.

175.At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, the majority of pupils noticeably lack confidence in speaking and listening. Some pupils in both French and German, however, show quick understanding, good fluency and confidence, as, for example, when Year 10 pupils talked about their day in school, or when Year 9 pupils compared leisure activities in the town and the country. Reading skills are below average generally, and this has a negative impact on substantial areas of the pupils' understanding of the language. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attainers cope satisfactorily with the longer texts for GCSE, but more extended reading for enjoyment is poorly developed. Writing is below average for the majority of pupils, although higher-attaining pupils from Year 9 onwards do use different tenses with satisfactory understanding. Pupils of all abilities occasionally make good use of word processing for writing personal descriptions in Key Stage 3, or producing travel brochures for their home town in Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, students write at length and with good accuracy on relevant modern topics such as protecting the environment.

176.Pupils' progress is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, and good in the sixth form. In the occasional lesson in Key Stage 3 it is unsatisfactory, due mainly to the poor attitudes of a few pupils. In general, higher attainers extend their range of topic vocabulary and improve their confidence in handling structures. Sixth formers consolidate their grasp of grammar, extend their reading skills, and satisfactorily combine language skills at a higher level. Generally, pupils in all key stages learn to use language for real purposes. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall in Key Stages 3 and 4, but there is insufficient extra in-class support in wide-ability classes which are too large.

177.Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good in the sixth form and good in Key Stages 3 and 4. In one lesson in Key Stage 3, the poor attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of pupils spoilt the learning environment. However, this is rare. In the best lessons in all key stages, pupils participate willingly in class activities and show interest and enjoyment. Concentration is mostly good. A number of pupils work well independently and develop satisfactory reference skills, but the majority are too reliant on teacher guidance. Pupils lack practice at working cooperatively in pairs or small groups.

178. Teaching is good overall at all levels. In three out of four lessons, teaching is good. In one lesson, it was unsatisfactory. Teaching is weakest where there is insufficient or ineffective use of the foreign language in the lesson, and activities lack pace or do not involve pupils actively enough in their learning. Teachers have satisfactory or good command of the foreign language, and, in the vast majority of lessons, use it appropriately. In the best lessons, preparation and planning are good, teachers' expectations of the pupils are suitably high, relations are positive, routines and discipline are good, and feedback to pupils by teachers is encouraging. Suitable homework is given regularly and used effectively to consolidate learning or as a preparation for the next lesson. Good use is made of resources, in particular ICT, but there are insufficient opportunities for more extended reading for pupils.

179. Leadership and management of the department are good, focusing well on creating a team effort to raise standards of both teaching and learning. Development planning is thorough in the short and medium-term, but lacks detail and priorities in the longer-term. The design of the school curriculum in Years 8 and 9 makes it difficult to introduce equitably a second foreign language. Assessment procedures in the department are thorough and manageable, and information is used well. However, recording is insufficiently centralised to enable ready access to information for planning. The response to the last report has been positive. Teaching has improved, the use of resources and the range of teaching strategies are both better, and accommodation is now satisfactory. There is a good programme of exchanges to Russia, France and Germany. Specialist rooms are well maintained. Good displays of pupils' work help to create a positive ethos for the teaching of modern languages.

## **Music**

180. The standards achieved in music at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the national expectation. The 1999 teacher assessment indicated 61 per cent of pupils to be working below expectation. This reflects a decline in attainment from the 20 per cent below in 1998. At the end of the key stage, in the lessons observed during the inspection, the majority of pupils could manipulate ICT to select sounds on keyboards for use in their performances and compositions and were developing satisfactory listening skills. Whilst many could perform simple ideas on keyboards they found coordinating with other performers difficult. When required to create a Blues fill-in, pupils found improvising and structuring ideas problematic and were unable to evaluate their ideas. Many pupils could not recall theoretical information provided in previous lessons and were often unsure of basic notation.

181. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is broadly in line with national averages. In the 1998 GCSE examination, about twelve per cent of pupils gained A\* to C grades, compared with the national average of 64 per cent, but 100 per cent achieved A\* to G grades. In the 1999 examination, the school's proportion of A\* to C grades rose to 33 per cent, and again, 100 per cent gained A\* to G grades, denoting a rising trend. This is strongly confirmed by the standards in lessons observed during the inspection. At end of Key Stage 4, pupils have good listening skills and can recognise cadences, dictate rhythmic patterns and perceive changes in orchestral music. Some pupils' compositions show a good understanding of multi-layered rock music, traditional counterpoint and how computers can be utilised to create scores and performances of their ideas. Most pupils can evaluate their ideas, but their approach to overall structures is less confident.

182. The standards achieved at post-16 by the small cohort currently in Year 12 are in line with national expectations. This is the first A level group for many years. Pupils can perform to a good standard on at least one instrument, use ICT to generate compositions and demonstrate competent research skills using a wide range of sources. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls or according to ethnicity at any stage.

183. At Key Stage 3, overall progress is unsatisfactory. Although pupils make satisfactory gains in their use of ICT, keyboards and listening skills, progress in group performances, understanding of notation and evaluation of their work is too limited for the majority of pupils. At Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress in the use of ICT, listening skills and their understanding of music; progress in composition and performance is at least satisfactory and equates to their academic attainment levels. At post-16, progress is good in all areas of the course.

184. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory attitudes in music lessons. At Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils are respectful of teachers, arrive promptly to lessons and exhibit sensible behaviour. In practical work, concentration levels are limited and some find it difficult to work independently. Resources are well treated.

Relationships are friendly. At Key Stage 4 and post-16, pupils have good working habits, collaborate with teachers and possess good levels of concentration. When involved in extracurricular work, all pupils are responsible and enthusiastic.

185. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and it is good at post-16. Overall, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 88 per cent of the lessons inspected and unsatisfactory in 12 per cent. Teachers are well-qualified specialists who provide an imaginative curriculum to stimulate pupils' interest through its highly practical content, often related to pupils' own musical tastes. Teachers know their pupils individually, and pupils benefit from firm, friendly and supportive discipline. In the most effective lessons, teachers integrate performing, listening and composition with ICT which set high expectations, as seen in the Gamelan project in Year 7. In a few lessons, such expectations are unrealistic for some pupils. Individual lesson planning is variable in quality. At Key Stage 4, a listening session was well planned, with a sequence of progressive tasks to ensure maximum learning, but in a Year 8 class, pupils lost interest when excessive time was given over to the repetition of a simple ragtime motive. Planning does not always provide sufficient material to challenge higher-attaining pupils. Teachers make skilful use of a wide range of resources and ICT in most lessons, but the inevitable noise levels limit the development of aural discrimination amongst pupils. Teachers provide appropriate assessment and keep efficient records to chart progress and set targets for future work. The departments' own homework booklets at Key Stage 3 are imaginatively conceived to enhance work done in lessons. Examination work is well marked, providing detailed comments for improvement. Two unsatisfactory lessons inspected involved some inconsistency in class control and discipline, resulting in loss of pupils' concentration. Peripatetic teaching is good: lessons are well organised and pupils are vigorously challenged to develop their musicianship.

186. The quality of music education is significantly enhanced by the good leadership of the department. A wide range of well-supported extracurricular activities and concert opportunities is tirelessly promoted, and an open house to its many resources is provided for all pupils outside the main timetable.

187. The decline in standards at the end of Key Stage 4 and the limited take-up rates at GCSE result from the loss of continuity in Year 9 caused by the reduction in timetable allocation. Music lessons in this year especially are so widely spaced that pupils have great difficulty building on prior knowledge and skills. This leads to unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. Also, the impoverished experience of music in Year 9 takes place precisely when pupils are deciding on GCSE courses; relatively few choose the subject at Key Stage 4 as a result, and those that do lack the solid foundation that prior learning should provide.

188. Since the last inspection, Key Stage 3 pupils have improved their listening skills and their curriculum has been greatly enriched by the inclusion of more world music and significant opportunities for computer-generated work. There remains some inconsistency in provision for differentiated practical work.

## **Physical education**

189. Overall standards in physical education are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils generally have a sound understanding of game contexts and use their spatial awareness and travelling skills to adapt accordingly to passing and attacking contexts. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above national expectations. Pupils have a good understanding of attack versus defence strategies in a range of games. The department had its first GCSE cohort in 1999. Provisional interpretation of the A\* to C passes shows the results to be below national averages. These results are good when compared to other results in the school, and satisfactory when compared to similar schools nationally. In present Year 11 GCSE classes, pupils critically plan and evaluate specific training schedules. They have a sound understanding of the physiological structure of training sessions and above-average skills in football, netball and hockey. A substantial number of pupils take part in extracurricular activities and inter-form competitions. These experiences are significant in raising standards, and many individual pupils and school teams do well in county and national competitions.

190. The majority of pupils make good progress across both key stages. Progress in football, netball and basketball is enhanced by well-targeted activities, which challenge and extend pupils' thinking and performing. Boys make good progress in understanding the positional responsibilities, time on the ball and decision making in football. Girls consistently make good progress in netball by practising and refining catching skills under pressure and pivoting to enhance space and timing of passes. Year 7 girls have made rapid progress in developing sophisticated sequences in gymnastics. Further opportunities to improve the progress of pupils with identified special needs, including the most able, are sometimes restricted by a lack of specifically planned

activities. Progress in one Year 7 football lesson was unsatisfactory. Tasks did not relate to appropriate National Curriculum outcomes and the lesson lacked pace and rigour and did not take into consideration the pupils' levels of attainment.

191.The overall pupil response at both key stages is good. Good participation levels and a positive learning ethos demonstrate the extent of motivation not only in the majority of lessons, but in very good extracurricular provision, form matches and inter-school competitions. Pupils are infrequently required to respond to teaching tasks that require independent thinking and personal decision-making. When this happens, as in the preparation of training schedules for GCSE work, pupils respond very positively. There is a significant difference between boys and girls in their ability to remain focused in their lessons and listen carefully to instructions. In some boys lessons progress is less developed because of poor attitudes and behaviour.

192.The quality of teaching is good at both key stages, with examples of very good teaching in a number of lessons. One lesson had unsatisfactory teaching. The majority of teachers have good subject knowledge. Swimming and basketball lessons are very good examples of how teachers expertly give technical information and instructions to their pupils. Most teachers make pupils aware of the lesson objectives and of their achievements. However, present short-term planning is not fully capitalising on specific learning outcomes to inform pupils of relevant key-stage achievements or to influence the immediate next stage of learning. Well-structured and planned units of work provide very good learning tasks to ensure the majority of pupils, practice, refine and develop appropriate physical and intellectual skills. The structure of many lessons at both key stages does not logically connect individual skill acquisition to the full game resulting in some pupils struggling in crowded and competitive situations. The recently developed schemes of work for GCSE course is ensuring those present cohorts are making good progress. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils, but there is not a consistency in their planning, or variety in teaching strategies, to capitalise fully on the needs of the most and least able pupils in lessons. They have good management and organisational skills, making very efficient use of learning grids. Lessons are usually well administered and controlled. During the inspection week a significant number of boys disrupt certain lessons and teachers do not always have the necessary strategies to successfully rectify the problems.

193.The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The new head of department has a clear vision of future needs and the department has very good capacity for future improvement. However, present development plans lack the necessary structures to monitor teaching or to rationalise curriculum units of work to improve the continuity and progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. The introduction of recent assessment procedures helps the department to monitor the progress of pupils very well, and accurate target setting is becoming a feature of day-to-day learning. The desire to raise standards further has been hampered by recent curriculum changes. The continuity of learning is hampered across both key stages when pupils receive their allocation once in a two-week period. Many have this in two-hour lessons, with further problems of timetabling two members of staff for the period. A feature of this arrangement is the inability of a significant number of pupils to maintain concentration, acceptable behaviour and performance levels for the whole period.

### **Religious education**

194.Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is average: it matches the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have some knowledge of key aspects of the Christian religion. For example, they know about the origins of Christian ceremonies such as baptism and the teachings of Jesus through parables. They are able to evaluate evidence for and against religious arguments such as the existence of God. Most pupils understand religious teachings about temptation, forgiveness and the concepts of right and wrong. They know something about natural philosophers and their explanation of life's purpose and meaning. They have much less knowledge and understanding of other world religions.

195.Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. A small number of pupils are achieving above-average standards, but only about a third of those entered for the GCSE examination in 1999 achieved grades A\* to C, compared with 50 per cent nationally. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are familiar with contemporary issues such as drug abuse, abortion and euthanasia, and many appreciate how religious beliefs affect people's attitudes to every day life.

196.Pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 is good. Most have progressed from a basic knowledge of facts to a deeper understanding of more difficult questions about the creation of the universe and the meaning of life. They can deal with arguments about issues such as those for and against the divinity of Christ, and many have gained a

deeper understanding of concepts such as forgiveness and are able to empathise with Christian characters whose lives have been affected by religion.

197. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Most pupils are able to reflect on issues such as death and appreciate the feelings of relatives of someone who has died. They are able to compare and contrast different approaches to problems such as drug abuse and treatment. Pupils' progress is limited by the amount of curricular time available, which is inadequate for the effective delivery of the full locally agreed syllabus.

198. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally very good. At the beginning of Key Stage 3, most pupils are enthusiastic, but often boisterous and noisy. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority are well motivated and work well individually and in pairs and many show good initiative. At Key Stage 4, behaviour is very good and pupils show interest and take pride in their work.

199. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good and at Key Stage 4 it is satisfactory. Teachers show good subject specialist knowledge and communicate successfully. They know their pupils well and cater effectively for those with special educational needs. The range of teaching methods used in both key stages is, however, limited and this hinders progress; while progress is not unsatisfactory, its scope for becoming very good is impeded. Expectations are high in some lessons, but they are not always sufficiently demanding, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to become actively involved in their learning by, for example, giving presentations, enacting festivals and ceremonies, handling religious artefacts or visiting places of religious worship. Most lessons are carefully structured, marking is used well in Key Stage 3, though pupils are not always sure of the meaning of grades, and meaningful homework is set regularly in both key stages.

200. At Key Stage 3, six out of ten classes have lessons on a fortnightly basis. The long gaps between lessons make it difficult to monitor homework and adversely affect pupils' progress. The management of the department is good and teachers set a good example to their pupils. Good use is made of video recordings, but insufficient use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning.

201. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and the pace of lessons has increased. However, provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is insufficient and does not meet statutory requirements. Some resources are out of date and need replacement.

### **Business education**

202. Attainment in GCSE business studies in 1999 was well below the national average in terms of A\* to C grades. However, the school matches national averages for grades A\* to G. The majority of candidates in 1999 achieved grades broadly in line with their individual results in other subjects. The performance of girls was marginally better than that of boys. Attainment in the previous year, 1998, was considerably better, though still below the national average. The attainment of GNVQ part 1 business candidates in each of the past two examination years is broadly in line with national averages.

203. Overall, using current inspection evidence and past examination results, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly in line with national averages. Pupils show good understanding of business terminology and are able to use it appropriately both in their written work and in classroom interaction, for example, when explaining the differences between private and public limited companies, or making clear the differences between market segment and market segmentation. They are able to construct and interpret demand and supply curves and explain entries in balance sheets.

204. Progress in Key Stage 4 is good. It is well demonstrated by written and oral work in lessons and over time, as well as that displayed on classroom walls. There are good opportunities to enhance key skills, particularly in ICT, in which pupils demonstrate competence with new procedures such as the use of a spreadsheet to compile a product life cycle, or in the use of graphics software when preparing leaflets and posters.

205. Overall attainment in A level business studies in the sixth form matches national standards. Pass rates are above the national average for all grades, but a little below for the proportion obtaining grades A and B. The results in the most recent year showed a four per cent improvement over 1998, which had been slightly below national expectations. For GNVQ business, at both intermediate and advanced levels, attainment is at least average, and often above average. Standards of advanced candidates achieving passes for the full award are above national averages, with a small proportion achieving merit or distinction. The number of candidates in

1998 was too few for meaningful comparisons to be made, but results were also above national expectations. The number of sixth form students entered for GNVQ intermediate or advanced business increased substantially by 1999. At intermediate level, the proportion achieving the full award in 1999 was a little above national averages, and all candidates achieved pass grades in 1998. Sixth form students' attainments in key skills are satisfactory, and there are good examples of individual work in ICT, for example, in accessing the Internet to research industrial relations or the role of employer organisations. Progress for sixth form students is good, reflecting good teaching and positive attitudes.

206. Students' responses to their teachers at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are very good. Lessons are clearly enjoyed, particularly in the sixth form, and relationships with teachers are relaxed yet respectful. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have good attitudes to their work, with lessons proceeding in a businesslike atmosphere and tasks being carried out within required time limits. There are always plenty of volunteers to answer teachers' questions. Pupils demonstrate pride in their achievements, for example, the work displayed on classroom walls, and they cooperate well when working in pairs or small groups. The capacity for individual study skills shows progression through the key stages.

207. The quality of teaching in the department is good, with some very good features. Staff are well qualified and experienced, and are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects and the courses offered. They have very good ICT capability, reflected in the appearance of worksheets and handouts, which in turn raise pupils' awareness of the standards to which they should aspire. Teachers have very good knowledge of individuals' needs, demonstrated, for example, by the production of additional worksheets with particular learners in mind, at both extremes of the ability range. Lessons and units of work are well planned, within the requirements of the external examination bodies, and staff have gained appropriate assessor awards for their GNVQ work. Teachers could, however, provide additional classroom opportunities for post-16 students to challenge and to elaborate verbal responses, in order to increase their confidence in their own judgments. Teachers will also need to pay particular attention to the revision of their schemes of work, classroom teaching approaches and on-going monitoring of students' progress in the GNVQ advanced course as a result of the considerable reduction in student-teacher contact time instituted at the start of this academic year.

208. The department is very well led. Documentation is well organised, and consistent in its approach for the team of teachers and variety of courses. Record keeping and analysis are meticulous, teaching styles under regular review, and mutual lesson observations aid the sharing of best practice. Assessment procedures are consistent, and students' work is moderated according to awarding body standards. Displays, use of furniture, care of resources and equipment are all of a high standard, and do justice to the splendid suite used by the business team.

209. Since the last inspection, the department has continued to improve standards of business education and now ensures a high knowledge content in GCSE courses, as well as more varied learning experiences at A level. The Key Stage 4 curriculum includes GCSE business studies, and GNVQ part 1 business at foundation and intermediate levels; GCSE economics with business has been added this year. These alternative courses provide a good base for the post-16 programmes offered, and progression is facilitated as the same team of teachers are involved with both stages.

216. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

216. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

210. This report bases its judgements on the work of 16 inspectors spending a total of 66 inspector days in school. Extensive analysis was made before during and after the inspection of policy documents, schemes of work and other relevant statements. Parental views were sought and recorded via the standard questionnaire and parents' meeting. 196 hours were spent on lesson observation, sampling all year groups, subjects and ability sets. Interviews took place with governors, the Headteacher and all teachers with a significant management role as well as with non-teaching staff and representatives of the wider community. The work of a sample of pupils across all subjects was formally scrutinised by inspectors, together with that of other pupils seen in lessons. Discussions were held with pupils. A total of 91 hours were spent on further observations, interviews and the formal scrutiny of work.



## 217. DATA AND INDICATORS

### 217. Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1933	36	476	540

### 217. Teachers and classes

#### 217. Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	107.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	18.0

#### 217. Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff:	14
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	454

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	79
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	24
	KS4	22

### 217. Financial data

Financial year:	1998/9
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Total income	4,595,200
Total expenditure	4,612,801
Expenditure per pupil	2,386
Balance brought forward from previous year	237,137
Balance carried forward to next year	219,536

217. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1933
Number of questionnaires returned:	226

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	22	66	8	3	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	42	55	2	2	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	21	57	17	4	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	29	65	4	2	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	47	37	10	4	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	36	59	4	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	19	63	14	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	29	59	5	5	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	25	62	11	1	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	27	55	13	5	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	37	52	7	3	1