

INSPECTION REPORT

LONG EATON SCHOOL

Long Eaton

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique Reference Number: 112934

Headteacher: R Orriss

Reporting inspector: Grace Marriott
3674

Dates of inspection: 31st January to 4th February 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	K Clamp
Date of previous inspection:	November 1995

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Elisabeth Fraser	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
Betty Barratt	Team inspector	History	The school's results and achievements How well pupils are taught
Valerie Elliott	Team inspector	Religious education	How good the curricular and other opportunities are
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Long Eaton is a seven form entry mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 - 18 with 1025 pupils, including a sixth form of almost 100. There are almost equal numbers of boys and girls. The school roll is rising. The intake is broadly average in terms of pupils' family backgrounds though more come from disadvantaged than very advantaged families. The school has more pupils whose attainment on entry is below average than it does the higher attainers. In the core subjects the attainment on entry in mathematics has been lower than in English or science. The attainment on entry of the present Year 7 is, however, better than that of previous years. Almost 14 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is also broadly average, though the number with statements is above average. Very few pupils are from ethnic minorities. The school has an In-School Inclusion Centre.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is providing a sound education and standards are rising. The teaching is good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 3. The school is well managed and the headteacher and senior staff provide good leadership. The school gives sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The teaching in English, science, geography and art is consistently good.
- Attainment in information technology and geography is above average in Key Stage 4 and attainment in science is above average in Key Stage 3.
- Work in the performing arts is good.
- The teaching seen was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons. It was very good in a quarter of lessons and good in over half.
- The pupils work and behave well.
- The headteacher provides good leadership. He is well supported by the senior management team, staff and governors.
- The In-school Inclusion Centre has been effective in reducing exclusions and improving behaviour.
- The school has very good community links.
- The ECO school environmental initiative is making a strong contribution to the school's work.

What could be improved

- The satisfactory teaching could be raised to the level of the good and very good.
- The short courses in design and technology, modern languages and religious education in Key Stage 4 are not promoting high enough standards.
- Standards in modern languages are not high enough in both key stages.
- Pupils do not have enough access to information and communication technology.
- Assessment could be used more effectively in planning work.
- Resources are not adequate in most subjects and spending on resources is relatively low compared with schools nationally.
- The school is not meeting statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form, nor for collective worship.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1995. Since then it has made considerable progress. The headteacher, senior management and staff have systematically dealt with the issues identified in the last report and have also set their own priorities for development. Academic standards have risen significantly, particularly in relation to GCSE results. The quality of teaching has improved overall. The monitoring of teaching and academic standards is better at all levels in the school and this has resulted in higher standards. The whole school-literacy strategy is a good feature. Attendance and behaviour have both improved considerably. The work done on behaviour management and the provision of the In-School Inclusion Centre have had the effect of considerably reducing the number of exclusions. Two subjects, art and physical education, which were identified as key issues, have both improved. The provision for information technology, though improved, is still not satisfactory and the school still does not fully meet statutory requirement for collective worship or religious education, though there has been some improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	1998	1997	1999
GCSE examinations	C	D	D	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	D	D	

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

At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment has been close to national averages over the last three years with no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. In English, attainment is average, in mathematics it is average and in science it is above average. The above table shows that GCSE results improved from 1998 to 1999 and are in line with the average for all schools and those with a similar intake of pupils. Standards of work seen in Year 11 during the inspection showed a similar pattern, with average attainment in English, science, history, art, physical education, music, design and technology, above average attainment in information technology and geography, and below average standards in mathematics, modern languages and religious education. Both boys' and girls' attainment improved significantly in 1999. The gap between their attainment continues to match the national difference. The school is well on track to achieve the targets it has set. Students' attainment at GCSE Advanced level is below course averages overall. In 1999 the school's average points score of 12.5 was well below average but the small numbers taking A level make comparisons with national figures less than reliable. However, the pass rates in English, mathematics, theatre studies and the sciences broadly matched the average. Inspection evidence of the work of students in Year 13 confirmed these standards and also showed that the levels being reached in the other subjects offered at A level - history, geography and art - also matched course averages, reflecting the overall trends of improvement in standards in these subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good, pupils work with interest and respond well to teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, pupils behave sensibly in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good, pupils work well together.
Attendance	Good, attendance is now better than the average.

Pupils and students enjoy school and there is a very pleasant atmosphere in and around the school. The behaviour in almost all lessons and at break times was good or very good. Relationships are very good at all levels. The pupils tend not to be very active learners but they participate willingly in lessons and generally show good concentration.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
	Satisfactory	Good	Good

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

The teaching was good or better in 56 per cent of the lessons, in 31 per cent it was good, in 23 per cent very good, and in 2 per cent it was excellent. Only 4 per cent of teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory, with 1 per cent being poor. Teaching is strongest at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Practice is of especially high quality in English, where over 94 per cent of the teaching seen was good and 47 per cent was very good and in some lessons it was excellent. Teaching in geography and art is also of very high quality. In science and most other subjects well over 50 per cent of the teaching is at least good. There was some unsatisfactory teaching in religious education, modern languages and mathematics. However, in all these subjects there was a good proportion of good teaching. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Teaching has many strengths at all stages, but is less strong where too little is expected of pupils and the work set is not well matched to their learning needs. Overall, pupils' progress and achievements are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Provision for pupils with special educational needs, the most able pupils and those with English as a second language is satisfactory overall. However, the approach to teaching the most able pupils and those with English as an additional language lacks co-ordination.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum offered at both key stages is broad and has notable strengths though there are some weaknesses in Key Stage 4 in the provision of short courses and the time allocated to general physical education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for these pupils is sound overall. The liaison with the In-School Inclusion Centre is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has very few pupils for whom English is an additional language. The provision is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social, cultural development	The provision for spiritual development is not satisfactory, but it is good for moral and social development. It is also good for cultural in terms of western culture and satisfactory for other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has procedures which are sound for monitoring academic development, good for personal development and behaviour and excellent for monitoring attendance.

The partnership with parents; the school is most effective in promoting and developing good links with parents where there are concerns about academic or other difficulties. Staff work hard to inform parents about success and improvement using an effective range of strategies including congratulatory postcards.

The curriculum offered at both key stages is satisfactorily broad and has notable strengths which promote high achievement. The provision of time for English, for example, is good and the ways in which the school supports the development of pupils' literacy skills is also a strength. There has been a continuous improvement in lesson time for mathematics as this is seen as a priority to help raise attainment. The school has successfully developed a range of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Other strengths include the performing arts, dance, drama and music. The public performances enrich many pupils' education and personal development.

There are also some weaknesses in the short course provision in modern languages and religious education limit good progression and high achievement. The statutory requirements for religious education are not met in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3 the arrangements for a second modern language are not satisfactory and affect work in art and religious education and well as languages. The provision of time for religious education is below what the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus recommends.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has a very clear school improvement agenda which is shared by the senior management team, the governors and virtually all staff. The school is well led and capably managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The school has a relatively new governing body which is still developing its role, but governors discuss issues fully and are prepared to challenge. The governors are fulfilling statutory duties except in provision of sixth form religious education RE and collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's ability to monitor and evaluate its performance has improved. The monitoring is providing a useful range of information for managers.
The strategic use of resources	The school's financial planning is closely linked to the priorities of the development plan.

The school has sufficient suitably qualified staff to teach the curriculum though there have been difficulties in staffing in mathematics, modern languages and information and communication technology. The accommodation is adequate overall, though the lower school in particular is in a poor state of repair and decoration. There are deficiencies in resources in almost all subjects and the funding allocated to resources is low in comparison with other schools nationally.

The school's main strength in leadership and management is the clear and unequivocal commitment by the headteacher, supported by the senior management team, to raising standards and improving the quality of education. Most subjects are well managed, with particular strengths in English, science, geography, design and technology and drama. The management of information and communication technology and modern languages is not strong enough. The school applies the principles of best value rigorously to its management of finances. The headteacher and chair of governors are increasingly applying these principles to the work of the school to ensure that the school gives value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing arts • Attitudes and values • Extra-curricular activities • The school expects pupils to work hard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents of 12 year olds are concerned about the partnership with parents and the amount of information they receive

Most parents are supportive of the school and the inspection team felt that their confidence in it is justifiable. Although most parents are satisfied with the information about their children's progress, concerns were expressed about this but mainly from parents of pupils aged 12. The school felt that where parents did not feel informed or consulted, this is

largely because of the length of the gap between consultation evenings. This is being reviewed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The school has more pupils whose attainment on entry to the school is below average than it does the higher attainers and standards are just below national averages overall. This is shown both in the results of tests on entry and in the standards of pupils' work shortly after their arrival at the school. The attainment on entry of the present Year 7 is, however, better than that of previous years.
2. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment has been close to national averages over the last three years, with no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls, and the gap in their attainment reducing even further in 1999. The school's trend of improvement during this period has been greater than the national trend. In 1999 the national test results were in line overall with the averages for all schools and above those with a similar intake. Results in science were particularly strong, being above the national average and above the average for similar schools. In English, results matched the average for all schools and were above average for similar schools. In mathematics the results matched the national average for all schools and for similar schools. Standards in the current Year 9 are in line with this pattern.
3. In other subjects, teachers' assessments suggested attainment which was well above average in information technology, above average in modern languages and physical education, average in geography and below average in design and technology and history. However, the inspection evidence showed attainment to be average in all subjects apart from geography where standards were above average, and modern languages where they were below average. The standards being achieved in religious education were below the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. The difference between the standards seen and those reflected in results of the National Curriculum teachers' assessment stems mainly from insecurely based teacher assessment. In the case of geography, standards have improved during the current year in line with the overall trend of improvement in the subject.
4. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is close to national averages. Over the last three years GCSE results have been below the national average. But in 1999 the GCSE average points score rose by three points to 35 bringing it broadly into line with the national average of 36 for similar schools and just below that of 38 for all schools. In English and science the results were in line with the average for all maintained schools. When compared with similar schools, the results in science were above the average and those in English were below average. In mathematics results were below the average for both all schools and similar schools. This picture is confirmed by the standards being achieved by the current Year 11 pupils. The difference between attainment in mathematics and the other two core subjects can be attributed to the fact that the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is lower in mathematics than in English and science and to the staffing difficulties in mathematics in recent years.

5. In other subjects, the results were above average in English literature, geography and music, and below average in design technology, French, dance and sociology. In the rest, results matched national averages. Standards seen during the inspection in the work of pupils in Year 11 showed a broadly similar pattern. The two exceptions are information and communication technology, where standards were above average as a result of the changed nature of the examination course, and in modern languages where standards were below average, reflecting weaknesses in the teaching in both key stages. Both boys' and girls' attainment improved significantly in 1999. The gap between their attainment, however, continues to match the national difference.
6. Students' attainment at A level is below course averages overall. During the last three years the A level average points score has fluctuated, reaching a high of 15.1 in 1998 but throughout has remained below the national average points score of 17.6. In 1999 the school's average points score of 12.5 was well below average. National comparisons must be treated with caution because the small number of A level students makes statistical comparisons less than reliable. However, the pass rate in English, mathematics, theatre studies and the sciences broadly matched the average. Inspection evidence confirmed these standards and also showed that the levels being reached in the other subjects offered at A level - history, geography and art - also matched course averages, reflecting the overall trends of improvement in standards in these subjects.
7. Much attention is given to raising attainment throughout the school, with priority being given to improving pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4. The school has set realistically ambitious targets for improvement at GCSE and has effectively supported these by a number of well judged measures. These include the detailed analysis and use of performance data for target setting and for identifying strengths and weaknesses, and the close monitoring of standards in subjects. This is most developed and effective at Key Stage 4. The school is well on track to achieve the targets. Systems for target setting and measuring the added value are less rigorous in the sixth form, and processes at Key Stage 3 are underdeveloped. Overall not enough use is made of performance data to track pupils' progress and attainment systematically throughout their time in the school.
8. Pupils' literacy skills meet national expectations at both key stages. The carefully structured development of language skills results in pupils being able to write using largely correct grammatical structures, appropriate punctuation and spelling basic words correctly by the end of Key Stage 3. Higher attaining pupils are able to write extended accounts and develop their ideas in some depth. The progress in writing continues through Key Stage 4, so that by the end of the key stage pupils take notes effectively and can write for a variety of audiences. Throughout the two key stages, pupils develop their skills in reading aloud. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils read using appropriate expression and pace, and this continues to develop through Key Stage 4. Oral skills are a little below national expectations when pupils enter the school, with many pupils being over-reliant on colloquial expressions and using a restricted range of vocabulary. By the end of Key Stage 3 most can express their views fairly confidently, using appropriate vocabulary, and by the end of Key Stage 4 they can put across their views convincingly in discussion. Listening skills are a strength across the school.

9. Pupils have a satisfactory grasp of number enabling them, for example, to understand which of the four rules need to be applied to solve problems. Most, however, are not secure with mental arithmetic and many are weak in this area. The recently introduced measures to address these weaknesses are well-conceived but more development is needed to ensure that pupils extend as well as maintain their number skills. Numeracy skills are satisfactory in a number of subjects. For example, pupils are confident in the use of spreadsheets involving the use of formulae in information technology. In geography and science they make effective use of statistical techniques to display data and aid analysis. They also use calculators appropriately in science in the processing of experimental data though at times, for instance in mathematics, there is over reliance on these aids.
10. Pupils with special educational needs and those of the highest ability make satisfactory progress. The learning requirements of pupils with special educational needs are generally well known by teachers, especially at Key Stage 3, but work is not consistently well matched to their needs. In many subjects, for instance, in mathematics, science, design and technology, history and religious education, progress at times is slowed because not enough attention is being given to ensuring a careful match between the tasks set, the materials used and the pupils' needs. Pupils make noticeably better progress when supported in lessons by learning support assistants. They are also well supported by the learning support department in attaining the targets on their individual education plans. The highest attaining pupils make satisfactory progress because they are well motivated and interested in their work. However, their progress is often no better than satisfactory because their learning needs are not sufficiently well identified and too little is expected of them. The few pupils with English as a second language make good progress overall because the support in lessons ensures that they have good access to the learning.
11. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 when matched against their attainment on entry to the school and those achieved in similar schools. Progress is better at Key Stage 4, with pupils gaining GCSE results which match national averages whilst at the end of Key Stage 3 their attainment was below the national average. It is also good in the sixth form, resulting in standards that are significantly better than those achieved by the same pupils at GCSE.
12. Pupils respond well to high levels of challenge. In English, progress is consistently good, reflecting the consistently high challenge in the teaching and resulting in the good development of literacy skills and powers of literary analysis which are a particular strength, especially at A level. Pupils rapidly improve their skills and become articulate and confident because of the realistically high expectations and encouragement of the teachers. In history, students in Year 13 are working responsibly with interest and enjoyment as mature students of the subject and achieving well because of the challenging, yet supportive, teaching. Their positive response is shown well in art with pupils engaging closely with their work and developing skills of a high standard as a result of the teacher's high expectations of the standards to be achieved.

13. However, standards of achievement and the quality of progress vary between subjects and sometimes within subjects. In many other subjects inconsistency in teachers' expectations and weaknesses in the match of work to pupils' learning requirements are significant factors in hindering progress and achievement overall. In mathematics, progress, though satisfactory, is impeded at Key Stage 3 by too low a challenge in the teaching, especially in Years 7 and 8, and at Key Stage 4 by staffing difficulties which sometimes result in teaching by non specialist teachers whose expectations are too low. In modern languages, achievement is restricted, especially at Key Stage 4, because tasks are not well matched to learning requirements, and expectations, especially of the spoken language, are too low. Progress is least effective in design and technology when pupils are not given enough opportunity to develop their creative skills. In most subjects not enough attention is given in lesson planning to ensure that the very highest attainers are given more challenging work. In religious education few pupils have a deep understanding of significance and meaning because the development of higher order skills of interpretation and response is not sufficiently planned. In geography higher attaining pupils are sometimes not fully challenged because the teaching is pitched at the middle range of ability in the group, and in history the setting of undemanding tasks in some lessons, especially in Year 7, significantly restricts the progress in the development of historical skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils and students enjoy school and there is a very pleasant atmosphere in and around the school. The behaviour in almost all lessons seen was good or very good as well as at break times. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils in class adversely affected some lessons. At that time, the inspectors expressed some concerns about a few pupils having poor self control and being rather boisterous in the more congested areas between lessons.. During this inspection it was clear that teachers have to spend little time maintaining attention and order. In science, for example, the whole class teaching was very effective because pupils were attentive and staff could keep up a good pace. Pupils were observed to take care even in the more crowded areas and staircases between lessons. Pupils queuing for food in the dining hall and in the areas around the vending machines behaved very sensibly taking their turns with good humoured patience. They made good use of break times for relaxing as well as for letting off steam playing informal games of football etc.
15. Since the last inspection there has been a marked reduction in the number of both fixed term and permanent exclusions, and these are now below national averages. The work of the In-School Inclusion Centre and the special needs department has been most effective in focusing on how to manage behaviour and promote good behaviour throughout the school. This improvement was confirmed by parents at the pre-inspection meeting, in their replies to the questionnaires, and in comments they added to the questionnaires. They feel that there has been an improvement in both attendance and behaviour since the last inspection, and that although on occasion there are pockets of disruption these are well contained. The school provides very effective support for pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties. In interviews and discussions, pupils indicate that they feel safe in the school. Pupils agreed that any bullying is usually dealt with effectively by staff.
16. The inspection team was impressed by the relaxed atmosphere free from tensions in all parts of the school, and found pupils polite and courteous. Pupils were pleased

to discuss their work with visitors, and are appreciative of the range of extra-curricular activities, visits and trips the school provides. Pupils are very supportive of the range of environmental projects resulting from the work of the ECO committee, ably led and promoted by school staff, including the bursar. Involvement and participation in drama and music productions are very high, both from pupils and students working back stage, as well as from those who appear on stage. There is a good take up for the full range of extra-curricular and sporting activities, including dance. Pupils in the sixth form participate well in the life of the school, for example, organising sporting activities and with extra-curricular activities, with charitable work, and helping with the induction programme.

17. In lessons, pupils show an interest and involvement in much of their work; in Years 10 and 11 pupils were putting a good deal of effort into researching and completing projects, while a number of pupils were working through break and after school to complete project work and practical work. In the textiles room, over break, pupils were continuing tie-dye projects. In Year 7 science lessons pupils enjoyed working with microscopes and their practical work on properties of materials. In art, pupils arrived promptly at the start of sessions and were keen and eager to learn a variety of skills, while in physical education pupils changed quickly to make best use of the time.
18. The team found that generally pupils enjoy doing well and are interested in the work, but are mainly compliant rather than active learners. For example, in science in Year 8, although pupils enjoyed using light boxes to investigate the properties of lenses, they were satisfied with just getting a 'right' result and recording it. They showed little interest or curiosity in exploring what other effects they could discover for themselves by moving and tilting the lenses. In most subjects pupils answer questions and contribute to class discussions quite freely, but are generally more inclined to give factual answers than express their own opinions. This compliance contributes to the generally satisfactory and sometimes good levels of attainment seen in lessons and in work, but attainment was rarely very good.
19. Pupils listen to each other in lessons, but are not very confident in expressing and sharing views and opinions. In personal, health and social education in Year 9 they had difficulty discussing how they might feel in situations involving relationships, and in religious education were given few opportunities to talk about and reflect on different beliefs. Pupils were more forthcoming in English and drama, where they are given better opportunities for reflecting on and considering the impact of actions. They showed good insights, through personal writing, drama and the study of literature, while in the sixth form history students showed maturity and sensitivity reflecting on the holocaust and its relevance to problems today.
20. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good in all parts of the school. In the art department, for example, a positive ethos is encouraged in which pupils support and listen to each other. Staff give generously of their time to help pupils

with clubs. Pupils relate well to each other, and work co-operatively in a number of subjects, for example, in art collaborating and sharing materials, in music performing well together, and in the sixth form working together to run the coffee bar and organise social activities. Pupils show considerable care and consideration for pupils with special educational needs and physical difficulties and they are well integrated into the life of the school.

21. Attendance has improved since the last inspection, and there has been a welcome reduction in unauthorised absences and an improvement in punctuality following a very effective whole-school focus on raising standards. Good individual and class attendance is recognised and rewarded, and better attendance is linked to the improved attitude and attainment of some potentially more disaffected pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. The quality of teaching is good. In the lessons seen during the inspection it was good or better in 55 per cent, in 31 per cent it was good, in 23 per cent very good, and in 2 per cent of lessons the teaching judged to be excellent. Only 4 per cent of teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory, with 1 per cent being poor. Teaching is strongest at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In science and most other subjects well over 50 per cent of the teaching is at least good. Practice is of especially high quality in English where over 94 per cent of the teaching seen was good and 47 per cent was very good and in some lessons excellent. Teaching in geography and art is also of very high quality. In both cases over 60 per cent of the teaching was good or better with 29 per cent being judged to be very good in art and 23 per cent in geography.
23. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen in religious education, modern languages and in mathematics where teaching in two lessons was judged to be unsatisfactory and one was poor. On the other hand, in all these subjects there was a good proportion of good teaching. For example, in mathematics a quarter of the teaching seen was very good and in some lessons excellent. In music the one unsatisfactory lesson was not typical of the subject teaching, where most of it was good and a third was very good.
24. Pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills at Key Stage 3, and good progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In English, science and art, however, progress is good at all stages as a result of consistently effective teaching. In these subjects pupils develop good levels of knowledge and skills from the outset, which they deepen and refine throughout their time in the school. In many subjects progress is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Often, this is because of too low a challenge in the teaching at Key Stage 3 as reflected, for example, in mathematics, design and technology and history where, in each case, the development of skills is slower at Key Stage 3.

25. Pupils' productivity and pace of working are also better at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Again, because of the high levels of challenge and expectation, the good pace of work and opportunities for reflection, pupils' application and intellectual effort in English are equally strong across the key stages. For similar reasons it is also good at all stages in art and music. In the many subjects where the quality of pupils' work is more variable, it is because the challenge and rigour in the work vary. For instance, in science, pupils work very well in most instances because of a very good focus on clearly defined learning objectives. This is reflected, for example, in the very good teaching of A level physics. Where teaching does not engage the pupils in intellectual challenge sufficiently it is often because teachers divert attention from key learning objectives. For example, in a Year 9 lesson in science, the challenge in the lesson was diminished because a teacher broke away from explanation about displacement in chemical reactions to ask pupils to write up their methods which could have been done at another time. Similarly, in design and technology pupils apply themselves well when challenged by interesting activities, such as designing costumes for the school drama production, but are constrained on other occasions by over prescriptive design briefs.
26. Pupils concentrate well and work hard in most lessons. In the great majority a good pace of work is quickly established and sustained with pupils responding with interest and quickly involving themselves in their learning. There are some good instances of pupils learning and deepening their understanding through discussion and debate in productive group work. This is exemplified particularly well in English. For example, one English lesson observed involved a group of pupils in Key Stage 4 discussing war poetry. Their level of interest in their work contributed to good gains in understanding, and they talked to one another with enthusiasm, drawing out perceptive insights into the moral issues inherent in a soldier committing suicide on the battlefield. Similarly, pupils working in groups studying the reaction of metals in science showed great interest. In some other subjects such approaches are not used sufficiently, resulting in pupils being less interested in their work. In modern languages, for instance, pupils' enthusiasm for learning languages is not aroused and while higher attaining pupils especially show interest, they do not become enthusiastic and independent learners.
27. It is only very rarely that a lack of interest or motivation slows learning. This usually occurs because of too low a challenge to sustain pupils' interest, or of work not being sufficiently well matched to their learning needs. For example, lower attaining pupils sometimes lose interest in large classes in design and technology when not appropriately guided and monitored in their work. Most pupils have a good awareness of the levels of their achievement and are keen to do well. Their knowledge of how well they are doing is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Their awareness is especially good where assessment and feedback procedures are effective, as is the case in science. Where assessment procedures are less systematic, for instance, in religious education, pupils have much less knowledge about how well they are doing.

28. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject are good and in the great majority of lessons they are skilfully shared with the pupils. The exceptions to this pattern are in mathematics where, whilst subject expertise overall is good, staffing difficulties have resulted on occasion in temporary non-specialist teaching in the subject, and modern languages where there is insufficient expertise in using the language being taught to develop pupils' listening and speaking skills at Key Stage 4. Across the curriculum, teachers' skills enable them to ensure the satisfactory teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy within the context of their subject.
29. Lesson planning is usually detailed in terms of clear learning objectives and the content to be covered. At best it provides for a good pace, variety and sequence of learning. Its main weakness, however, is that it often does not take sufficient account of the need to match the work carefully to the different levels of the pupils' attainment. There is a tendency to plan for the middle range of attainment with too little regard for the need to provide appropriate challenge and extension for higher attaining pupils, and appropriate challenge and support for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.
30. This shortcoming links with the differences identified in teachers' expectations and the levels of challenge in the work set. For example, in English where planning is consistently sharply focused on providing a range of learning to meet the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment, expectations and the challenge in the teaching are consistently appropriately high. The influence of exceptionally skilful planning having a direct bearing on the challenge of work was shown very well in mathematics where the imaginative planning for a Year 7 lesson resulted in the pupils not only making good progress but in their open enjoyment of the session. In general, however, where expectations are more variable, such as in mathematics, and also modern languages and religious education, whilst planning is usually detailed in terms of learning objectives, insufficient account is taken of the needs of individual pupils.
31. The most effective teaching methods include often clear and, at times, stimulating teaching, skilled questioning which is used effectively in many subjects and notably in mathematics, geography and history to challenge and to test knowledge and understanding. Discussion and group work is used particularly effectively in English to challenge pupils and deepen understanding through collaborative learning. Less effective strategies include the setting of undemanding tasks and over direction and too much talking by the teacher. These can result in too little excitement and inspiration in the learning and a loss of interest by the pupils. There is evidence of such methods in many subjects often alongside others which are much more effective. Resources are generally well chosen to support learning. Their use is particularly well planned in science. However, in some subjects, such as design and technology and history, there is an over reliance on work sheets. In history this arises from a shortage of text books, especially at Key Stage 3. The use of information technology to enhance learning is underdeveloped in most subjects. Support staff are effectively deployed to assist the learning of pupils with special educational needs and also those with English as a second language.

32. Learning is well supported in the great majority of lessons by the skilled management of pupils, good classroom relationships and good standards of behaviour. In the minority of lessons where pupils become inattentive, it is usually because the work is not well matched to their learning requirements. At best any deviation is dealt with quickly and unobtrusively.
33. Pupils' work is marked regularly and at best diagnostically, in nearly all subjects. The exception is modern languages where marking is inconsistent and provides insufficient guidance for improvement. Overall the value of written comments in providing useful guidance for raising standards varies considerably. While some are very helpful, for example, in English, mathematics and geography, in many other instances, comments are too superficial to be helpful, especially to higher attaining pupils. Assessment results are used to monitor progress and to set targets for improvement especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, though this is not consistent both across and within subject departments. Insufficient use is made of assessment results to set targets for attainment at Key Stage 3.
34. Appropriate importance is attached to homework as an integral part of learning. It is set regularly to extend and to prepare for the next stages of learning, and to assist pupils in the development of study skills. There is, however, some inconsistency in its effectiveness. For instance, it is particularly effective in mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4, but its value in the sixth form is limited by inconsistent marking. Also at times more could be expected of higher attaining pupils by setting more demanding tasks. This is the case in many subjects, but particularly so modern languages.
35. The extent to which teaching meets the learning requirements of all pupils varies across subjects and the key stages reflecting inconsistencies in the extent to which pupils' learning needs are known. The requirements of pupils with special educational needs are better known at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4 although teachers have access to individual education plans at both key stages. Setting arrangements are helpful in matching the work to their learning requirements especially at Key Stage 3. However, pupils make the best progress when withdrawn for assistance with the development of particular skills and when supported in lessons by learning support assistants. Provision for pupils with English as a second language is less well developed. The support available to them from learning support assistants is adequate because their numbers are relatively small and most are competent in the use of English.
36. Systems and procedures for the identification of the most able pupils are underdeveloped in departments and hence there are many instances across the curriculum where too little is expected of the highest attaining pupils.

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

37. The curriculum offered at both key stages is satisfactorily broad and has notable strengths, which promote high achievement. The provision of time for English, for example, is good and the ways in which the school supports the development of pupils' literacy skills are also a strength. There has been a continuous improvement in lesson time for mathematics as this was recognised as a priority to help raise pupils' attainment. Other strengths include the opportunity for pupils to take performing arts. Lessons in dance, drama and music, as well as the many public performances, successfully enrich many pupils' education and their personal development. The school has successfully developed a range of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. These include GNVQ foundation, intermediate and advanced courses and effectively offer learning opportunities relevant to the needs and aspirations of many pupils.
38. However, despite these good features there are some shortcomings in the curricular planning and organisation. These are most significant in modern languages and religious education and hinder good progression in learning and high achievement. At Key Stage 3, whilst more able linguists have opportunity to take a second language, not enough time is given to it to provide a good basis for progression at Key Stage 4. Timetabling arrangements also mean that these pupils miss parts of some lessons in art and religious education which interrupts the lessons for the whole class. The provision of time for religious education is below what the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus recommends to enable pupils to learn fully about religion and its effect on life.
39. The school plans the Key Stage 4 curriculum in such a way as to provide maximum breadth of choice and flexibility for pupils. This gives priority to pupils' individual choices but some of the arrangements do not effectively promote high standards. For example, those who take a short GCSE course in design and technology do not experience continuity in their work from Year 9. The school has improved the provision of religious education at Key Stage 4 to some extent because pupils now have the opportunity to take a short course GCSE in either Year 10 or 11, but they cannot take a full course. The time given to religious education for those who do not choose GCSE is very low and prevents pupils from reaching the expected standards of attainment. The short courses in modern languages are not resulting in high levels of achievement.
40. Pupils have effective opportunities to gain information and communication technology skills in their lessons at both key stages. They do not have enough opportunity to practise and develop skills in other lessons across the curriculum. In this respect, provision for information and communication technology has not improved enough since the last inspection.
41. The sixth form offers a limited range of A level courses, and GNVQ advanced courses. Although pupils' education is enriched by a programme of key skills and other activities beyond the classroom, there is a limited provision for physical education within the activities programme and the statutory requirement for religious education is not met for most sixth form pupils.

42. The vocational and well managed careers education programme, which starts in Year 9, prepares pupils effectively for the world of work and the next stage in their education. Careers Service staff join the school's careers department to run a stall at the Year 9 parents' evening, providing a wide range of information on work and further education opportunities in the area and further afield. All students and their parents are offered a careers interview and the school makes good use of information technology to provide up to date information to pupils on career prospects and choices.
43. The work experience programme in Year 10 provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to gain first hand job experience, and is very well supported by the local business community. Successful placements range from practical work, such as green keeping, to working in a travel agency and in local government. The careers and vocational programme is well supported by the local Chamber of Commerce, and Business and Enterprise Partnerships to enrich and extend opportunities and provision and the development of a meaningful programme. The careers department is pro-active in obtaining valuable grants for the successful implementation of agreed targets, initiatives and developments. A very interesting and honest evaluation of pupils' response to their work experience placements has been circulated to employers in the area. This should give them some food for thought about how some 'could do better' in comparison with others who provided meaningful and useful experiences for the students. The local authority provides very good support for the work experience programme by carrying out the required checks on businesses involved in the work experience programme, and provides an extensive database of appropriate work placements.
44. The programme of extra activities is good in music and the arts, but it is more modest in sport. Support for study is good; pupils can choose to go to supervised homework sessions after school each day and there is good support for literacy, for example, in the lower school library at lunch times. Pupils' learning in information and communication technology is also promoted by out of school access to facilities on both sites.
45. Special educational needs provision at Key Stage 3 and 4 is sound and has improved since the previous inspection. The school now meets the full requirements of the Code of Practice. As a result of this pupils' progress has improved. The close working partnership between the special educational needs staff and the In-School Inclusion Centre strengthens the school's provision.
46. The school supports pupils' social development well. Adults set positive examples and pupils express confidence that staff will help with problems. Pupils have good opportunity to develop social skills by working in pairs and groups in a number of subjects. Experiences, such as composing in music lessons, looking after equipment and taking care in practical work in science, also support pupils' increasing awareness of social responsibility. Opportunity for pupils to take responsibility is particularly good in the sixth form. Here, pupils take their role to set standards and help in the school and wider community very seriously. They help younger ones with reading, for instance, as well as organising social and charitable events. Pupils of all ages also develop in self-confidence through the very popular public performances in music and drama.

47. Pupils' personal development is effectively supported by taught programmes of personal and social education. These include health and sex education, careers and relationships. Drugs education starts early, in Year 7, and pupils' awareness is further developed as they grow through the school. There are very good links with the community police who contribute significantly to this. Sixth form pupils, for example, were recently able to debate the question of legality or illegality of cannabis in a real court room situation.
48. The school promotes moral development well. There are high expectations on behaviour, a clear positive code of conduct and pupils learn to consider the consequences of their actions on others. A number of subjects give pupils opportunity to think about moral values as well as contemporary ethical questions. A particular strength is the work done on the environment in subjects such as geography. In addition, the ECO group successfully supports the development of responsible attitudes towards care and conservation of the environment. However, in some history lessons, opportunity to stimulate vigorous debate on moral issues arising from the past is not always fully exploited. Furthermore, the very low time given to the non-examination course in religious education at Key Stage 4 restricts the opportunity for pupils to develop understanding and informed opinions on a range of ethical questions, relevant to their futures lives.
49. Pupils have good opportunity to develop appreciation of their own local and national cultural heritage. This is through lessons in English and in the performing arts, the visits to theatre and concerts and through learning experiences in art, geography and history. However, the range of opportunity for pupils to develop understanding of rich cultural differences is less strong. Pupils encounter other cultures in, for example, lessons in geography and history, where they learn about life in Kenya, for instance. However, inadequacies with the modern languages provision limits the opportunity for pupils to gain good understanding of European influences and multi-cultural texts are not used as widely as possible in English. In religious education lessons, the chance pupils have to learn about the richness of cultural influences is affected by poor learning resources.
50. Provision for pupils to develop insight into values and beliefs is unsatisfactory. There has been some improvement since the last inspection, in that themes for the week are now planned for assembly and tutor time. During the inspection pupils considered "Words" in the two assemblies each experienced. Sometimes the thought for the day was considered in tutor time but, in general, pupils do not have enough opportunity to pause for quiet reflection. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met. Stronger aspects of provision for pupils' spiritual development are in the arts subjects where often their aesthetic appreciation and response is encouraged. The contribution made by religious education is limited. Pupils gain some knowledge of beliefs but they have little capacity to reflect. Overall, not enough attention is given at school or department level to plan and provide for this aspect of pupils' development.

Community links and involvement

51. The personal, health and social education curriculum is well supported by professionals and representatives of various agencies and organisations including the health and police services. The school has very good relations with staff at the adjacent fire station. The fire service supports the personal, health and social education programme and the school's emergency procedures, and the school provides them with facilities for courses and training; fire officers are often to be seen in the school canteen. The school has developed very useful links with the probation and prison service. The anti-drugs programme is made more relevant and meaningful for pupils by hearing first hand about the effect of the misuse of drugs and the reality of life in jail.
52. The school's status as an ECO school has raised its profile in the local and wider community, and pupils contribute to the improvement of the school and local environment and the community as a whole. Through such initiatives as the ECO programme, the school, under the imaginative direction of the school bursar, has successfully applied for grants from a wide variety of organisations both locally and nationally. These contacts have been maintained and developed to benefit the school, to widen and enrich the curriculum and opportunities for students. As an active participant in the Tidy Britain Campaign the pupils worked with fire service and British Waterways Board staff to clean and clear the canal running between the two school sites. The ongoing work, as part of safer routes to schools, brings pupils and local authority and the police service staff together to benefit the school and the community. The school is working in conjunction with the Probation Service, Groundwork Erewash and local further education establishments to develop a sensory garden for the lower school site which will make full use of recycled materials to provide a quiet space for reflection.
53. Despite the change in status since the last inspection the school continues to have strong and effective links with the community it serves. It provides facilities for a wide range of sporting and educational activities after school hours and in the holidays, and is actively promoting joint developments with local tennis and basketball clubs to the benefit of pupils, students and members in the area. The school still offers mature students the opportunity to take a number of courses, although it can no longer provide crèche facilities. The school has very good networks within the business community, and is very well supported by sponsorship from a wide variety of organisation which enrich the curriculum, improve resources and support initiatives.
54. The school has constructive links with partner educational institutions, including primary schools. Parents are very positive about the quality of the induction programme. As well as effective pastoral links between Years 6 and 7 and the early identification by special needs staff of pupils who may have difficulties with transfer, teaching staff have worked together to co-ordinate and develop the literacy programme.

55. The school makes good use of its effective links with a range of further and higher education establishments locally and further afield to enrich and widen the curriculum. For example, sixth form students take life classes at a local art college. The ECO group has commissioned students at the agricultural college to design the sensory garden, has briefed them and is now evaluating the initial presentations, which are of the highest quality. Students from Loughborough are designing a clock for the sensory garden, while students from Derby are working on a waste reduction and recycling initiative with the school. The school expects that sixth form students will be supported in developing effective links with other similar establishments in the area to develop their particular interests and needs.
56. Staff maintain productive contact with other establishments where they have previously worked, or where they now work part-time, and borrow resources and equipment to supplement the school's own. For example, in science, pupils enjoyed the model torso and eyeball which allowed them to examine the structure of the eye and lungs, and will benefit from the use of bio views to examine the lung cells of smokers and non smokers. Pupils enjoyed the exciting performance of a percussion group from a local college.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. The school gives high priority to ensuring the welfare of all its pupils, and all staff, academic, pastoral, administrative and support staff, are sensitive to the needs of pupils and work well as a team to care for them. Parents appreciate the quality of pastoral care and support for their children.
58. Staff are consistent in promoting good behaviour and positive attitudes in lessons and around the school and are good role models. Since the last inspection, staff are more confident and consistent in dealing with pupils with challenging behaviour and emotional difficulties. Procedures have been further clarified so that the roles of subject and pastoral staff are better defined. The focus on managing behaviour and links between the In-School Inclusion Centre and other agencies, such as the school psychology service, the health service and social services, have been effective in supporting pupils with behavioural and emotional problems and providing support for families and carers.
59. Procedures for monitoring and promoting high standards of attendance are excellent. The recent focus on raising the profile of attendance and punctuality has been most effective, and the reward system is supported by sponsorship from local business. The special needs team and the In-School Inclusion Centre are most effective in supporting and reintegrating pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties into school as well as helping pupils return to school after long absences, including those due to illness.
60. The year managers cite the reduction in exclusions and improvement in attendance as having had a significant impact on the ethos of the school as well as on the attainment and progress of individual pupils.

61. At departmental level, assessment practice is at least satisfactory in most departments though not consistent enough overall. In the English, science and mathematics departments, practice is good and teachers keep clear records to track pupils' progress. In art, clear and manageable records are kept and pupils set targets at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In GNVQ courses, systems are good and criteria are followed carefully. Sound systems are in place in modern languages but results of assessment are not routinely shared with pupils. In religious education, assessment is not linked closely enough to the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. There is no system for assessing attainment across the curriculum for information and communication technology.
62. The use of assessment to help guide future learning is also inconsistent. Departments, such as English and mathematics, use results and records of pupils' attainment well. However, in modern languages and religious education, assessment is not used satisfactorily to guide planning for different work for pupils of varying ability in mixed ability classes.
63. Teaching and support staff know pupils very well. The pastoral system is effective in supporting pupils and identifying difficulties. The pastoral team works effectively with the subject departments where difficulties with individual or groups of pupils arise to develop appropriate strategies. In many subjects, for example, in the science and mathematics departments, target setting is well used to monitor and track pupils' progress. Positive feedback and praise are used well in subjects such as art to promote pupils' effort and attainment. In the English department high expectations and support for pupils who find work difficult are effective in raising standards and pupils' self esteem. The personal, health and social education programme has recently been extended to provide a focus on key skills in Year 10, and this, in addition to other initiatives such as the homework club, is proving effective in supporting pupils' academic progress as well as their personal development.
64. The school's arrangements for child protection are very good. The school works very closely with a range of appropriate agencies to support pupils and families where there are concerns. The special needs team and In-School Inclusion Centre staff work very effectively together to identify and deal with child protection and other welfare concerns. They are ably supported by the visiting school nurse who provides confidential counselling and advice to support pupils, their parents and carers and staff in dealing with a range of issues.
65. The school's procedures for dealing with sick and injured pupils are very good. Staff responsible for first aid and welfare on both sites work very sensitively to support pupils who are hurt or unwell or who have on-going medical conditions. All accidents and incidents are carefully recorded ensuring that pupils' well-being can be monitored and any problems identified easily.

66. Staff have a high awareness of health and safety related issues within the subject departments and around the school and appropriate procedures are in place for monitoring health and safety around the school. However, the school and governing body are concerned about the potential hazards caused by the poor external condition of many of the buildings and their immediate surroundings. In music, equipment is carefully checked and pupils know how to transport equipment safely. A range of healthy options, including fruit, is available at lunchtime, supporting the focus on healthy living and lifestyles in science and personal, health and social education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

67. Parents are positive about and supportive of the school, of the standards achieved and the range of opportunities the school provides for parents to be involved in their children's progress and learning. They appreciate the accessibility of staff. The school has been most effective in promoting and developing good links with parents where there are concerns about academic or other difficulties. Form tutors and year managers work well with subject staff to inform parents about success and improvement, using an effective range of strategies that includes congratulatory postcards. Although the majority of parents are satisfied with how the school informs them of their children's progress, where concerns were expressed these were mainly from the parents of pupils aged 12 (Year 8). This was felt by the school to be because of the long interval between parents' consultations in Year 7 and Year 8. The inspection team supported the generally positive views and is confident that the school will take appropriate action to deal with the concerns in Year 8.
68. The school has a satisfactory range of opportunities for parents to be involved in a partnership for learning through consultation evenings, homework, individual contact from form tutors, newsletters and other documentation. Year 7 parents are kept particularly well informed through the termly Year 7 newsletter. Overall, parents receive limited information about the work covered each year in the different subjects, although a number of departments, for example, English and history, have good procedures for informing parents about initiatives and the progress of individual pupils. Attendance at consultation evenings, transition and option evenings and career discussions is satisfactory, but there is a significant minority of parents who do not take up these opportunities. In the annual pupil reports, parents are given clear information on effort, attainment and areas for improvement, while pupils are given good opportunities for self-evaluation. In some subjects, however, information on the work covered is rather limited.
69. Some parents are involved with their children's learning through support for homework and helping with sport and other extra-curricular activities. A number of parents are very supportive of the work experience programme, providing contacts or placements for students as well as their own children. The school has developed a very strong network with local business and other organisations which provide sponsorship and support, often as a result of parental contacts. The parent association puts on a range of social and fund raising activities for pupils and parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. The headteacher and senior management team provide good leadership and a strong sense of educational direction. The headteacher in particular has a clear and well-articulated commitment to raising achievement and improving the standard of education. This is understood and shared by staff and governors.
71. The school actively and successfully promotes good relationships and has sound arrangements for providing equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities for the great majority of pupils. There are some restrictions. For example, pupils studying a second foreign language in Key Stage 3 have a narrower experience of art and religious education than other pupils. In the Sixth Form, although the school tries to accommodate students' choices, not all of the subject combinations requested can be provided because of staffing and resource implications.
72. The leadership of heads of departments and year managers is effective overall and there are significant strengths in a number of subjects and year groups which have resulted in improved standards in academic work and attendance. The management of English, science, geography, drama and design and technology is good. In both art and physical education it has improved since the last inspection. In modern languages and information and communication technology there are weaknesses. Delegation of responsibilities is clear and staff with management responsibilities are clear about their extent.
73. Since the last inspection the school has implemented a systematic programme of monitoring teaching. The senior management team, heads of department and year managers have responsibility for observing and evaluating the teaching. This in turn leads to the targeting of professional development to specific needs and further support, both from within the school, and externally through the local education authority where necessary. The programme is having the effect of improving teaching and is having a positive impact on standards and pupils' behaviour, motivation and attendance. The school has also changed from a peer appraisal system to a line management model which has also been effective in identifying professional development needs.
74. The school has a relatively new governing body which is still developing its role, but governors discuss issues fully and are prepared to challenge. The governors are supportive of the school and aware of its main strengths and weaknesses. The governors are fulfilling their statutory duties except in ensuring provision of sixth form religious education and collective worship.
75. The school has good systems and procedures for financial management. The commitment to achieving best value is very explicit and all budget holders are expected to maximise the use of funding. Grants for specific purposes are properly and effectively used.

76. The school has sufficient well-qualified and suitably experienced staff to teach the curriculum offered, though there have been some difficulties in staffing mathematics, modern languages and information and communication technology. Educational and administrative support staff provide a good service and help the school to provide a sound education for its pupils. The time available for technician support in science is low, which though not having a detrimental effect on standards, is adding to the workload of teachers. New staff receive appropriate guidance and support.
77. There are deficiencies in resources in most subjects and the level of funding allocated to resources is low compared with most schools. Pupils in the lower school in particular commented that the quality of books is poor. However, the deficiencies are not having a significant impact on standards except in information and communication technology, mainly because staff are skilled at making best use of what is available.
78. The accommodation is barely adequate, though there is sufficient space available across the two sites. The lower school in particular is in a poor state of repair and decoration and this, while not having an obviously detrimental effect on the standards achieved except in music, does not provide a satisfactory environment. The facilities, for example, for information and communication technology and physical education at the upper school are not used to their fullest extent.
79. The school budget is carefully and well managed to support educational priorities. The headteacher, chair of the finance committee and bursar all have a good understanding of the school development plan and how the budget can be used to support raising standards. They are clear that the school must not only achieve best value, but must give it. The school's internal evaluation systems are being increasingly directed towards this end.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

80. The school has few areas of work or provision which are unsatisfactory and therefore need to be significantly improved, but it has the scope to improve satisfactory work in a number of subjects such as mathematics, physical education and religious education where progress is sound rather than good. The headteacher, staff and governors should work together to:
- Raise standards by improving the quality of satisfactory teaching, drawing on best practice in the school, and focusing in particular on:
 - Improving the pace and timing of lessons through brisker introductions, allowing enough time for effective plenary sessions;
 - Raising the level of challenge in question and answer sessions to check and probe understanding more deeply and challenge the higher attaining pupils more;
 - Planning work which more specifically meets the needs of higher attainers.

Paragraphs: 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 36, 111, 153, 162

- Review curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 to raise standards in the short courses in religious education, modern languages and design and technology.

Paragraphs 5, 13, 38, 39, 123, 129

- Raise standards in modern foreign languages by:
 - Providing a curriculum which at Key Stage 3 promotes appropriately high standards in the second modern language and allows all pupils access to their full entitlement;
 - Strengthening the management and leadership to ensure effective curriculum planning and monitoring of teaching and learning;
 - Raising the quality of teaching to that of the current best practice

Paragraphs 3, 5, 13, 38, 39, 156, 157, 163

- Improve pupils' access to information and communication technology through:
 - a development programme to upgrade hardware and software;
 - a training programme to ensure that staff are confident and competent users of information and communication technology;
 - the integration of information and communication technology into all departmental schemes of work.

Paragraphs 40, 155.

- Improve the use of assessment in planning to ensure a better match of work to pupils' attainment and ability through more effective target setting at all stages in the school, but most particularly at Key Stage 3.

Paragraphs 27, 29, 33, 61.

- Drawing up and implementing a programme to improve the resources across the curriculum.

Paragraphs 49, 76

- Meet statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form, and collective worship.

Paragraphs 41, 50.

In addition the governors should consider including these less significant issues in their action plan:

(a) providing more technician support time in science to reduce the workload on the teaching staff;

Paragraph 113

(b) improving the accommodation for music in the lower school

Paragraph 170

(c) making better provision for physical education in the sixth form

Paragraph 180

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	188
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	120

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2%	23%	31%	39%	3%	1%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	937	88
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	137	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	33	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	142	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	94	89	183

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61	56	62
	Girls	73	40	48
	Total	134	96	110
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74	53	61
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18	32	27
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	53	66
	Girls	65	39	54
	Total	123	92	120
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68	51	66
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25	23	27
	National	31	37	28

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	93	89	182

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	27	71	81
	Girls	43	81	86
	Total	70	152	167
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	42	91	100
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35 [32]
	National	37.8 [36.8]

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	48
	National	N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	29
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	904
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani	2	
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	7	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	166

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	20.5

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2283894
Total expenditure	2336045
Expenditure per pupil	2318
Balance brought forward from previous year	55704
Balance carried forward to next year	3553

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1008
Number of questionnaires returned	230

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	26	57	13	4	6
My child is making good progress in school.	31	61	5	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	58	12	3	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	63	14	5	2
The teaching is good.	21	64	7	3	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	14	55	21	7	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	34	53	9	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	53	5	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	14	52	22.5	5	6
The school is well led and managed.	17	59	9	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	62	8	2	4.5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	45	16	6	15

The questions where the *tend to disagree* response is high is because the responses for 12 year olds in this category were much higher than any other year group. The returns for the 11 year olds were the most positive overall.

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

ENGLISH

81. The majority of pupils come into the school with attainment levels which reflect the national average. This is borne out through the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests results in English, which pupils take in the last year of their primary school education, and also through looking at pupils' work and through discussion with pupils and teachers. Standards in reading and writing reflect national expectations. Oral skills are a little under-developed with pupils expressing themselves using a somewhat restricted range, and over colloquial vocabulary.
82. The results of the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests were broadly in line with the national average. Test results were above those of similar schools. There is evidence from test results to show that over the last four years the performance of pupils in English reflects the national picture.
83. At the end of Key Stage 4, the GCSE results in English in 1999 were close to the national average for attainment at grades A* to C, and above the national average in English literature. The difference in attainment between boys and girls was less marked than is seen nationally, with boys performing particularly well in English literature. GCSE drama results were better than national averages.
84. A level results reflect the whole range of attainment grades, and over time are at least as good as those seen nationally. Theatre studies had a small cohort of three students in 1999, two of whom obtained A grades and the third narrowly failing.
85. Analysis of pupils' work, and observation in lessons, shows that by the end of Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils write fairly extended pieces with largely accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. They express themselves orally with a fair level of confidence. Middle attaining pupils write less fully, with more grammatical and spelling errors. They, too, express themselves clearly orally, although with greater reliance on colloquial expressions. Lower attaining pupils write straightforward accounts, albeit with a number of mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils who have English as an additional language make progress at the same rate as other pupils. All pupils respond well to literary texts. They analyse character and themes and comment on the writer's intentions confidently, with higher attaining pupils showing quite sophisticated insights. All pupils discuss techniques of literary analysis showing how writers create particular effects, and why. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in their reading and writing skills.

86. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 respond sensitively to literary texts. They show an awareness of the language of literary analysis, and higher attaining pupils write extended, accurate pieces, showing understanding of plot development, themes and imagery. Middle and lower attaining pupils, too, show these insights though they are less developed. Pupils' reading and writing skills reflect national expectations by the end of the key stage, with higher attaining pupils being able to write extended pieces of discursive and imaginative writing which show an awareness of the reader. Their technical accuracy is good and their oral skills are well developed, with pupils able to argue a case convincingly. Middle and lower attaining pupils have these skills to a lesser degree. Pupils who have English as an additional language reflect the range of achievements of all pupils. Listening skills are well developed, with all pupils listening carefully to one another and the teacher, and they are able to ask pertinent, relevant questions. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with the rest of the pupils. Those taking the GCSE drama show a very good understanding of dramatic terms and theatrical technique, and improvise pieces showing good technical ability and sensitivity. Very talented pupils get the opportunity to work to their best ability in drama and show sustained, thoughtful understanding of the demands of the subject.
87. A level students show through their sustained writing and in discussion, that by the end of their course they can analyse literary texts well and sometimes very well. They often show perceptive, mature insights, and they employ appropriate terms to describe and explain a writer's intentions. Their essay writing is detailed and largely accurate. Students who have English as an additional language make very good progress in their ability to interpret and talk about a text. Those students studying A level theatre studies can, by the end of the course, speak thoughtfully, sensitively and articulately about their work, and they have acquired a good knowledge and understanding of theatrical technique. Very able A level students of both English and theatre studies make progress commensurate with their abilities.
88. Pupils have positive attitudes towards English across both key stages, and in the sixth form, where such attitudes are particularly marked. Pupils are also very keen to learn drama. Most pupils are interested in their work and show high levels of motivation. One lesson observed involved a group of pupils in Key Stage 4 discussing war poetry. Their level of interest in their work contributed to really good gains in understanding, and they talked to one another with enthusiasm, drawing out perceptive insights into the moral issues inherent in a soldier committing suicide on the battlefield. In the sixth form, students show an appreciation of humour, and they are clearly interested, challenged and stimulated by their work. Very good behaviour in lessons is fostered by the strength of relationships between pupils and with teachers: these contribute significantly to an effective climate for learning. The opportunity to reflect is built into many lessons, and this, too, has a positive contribution towards pupils' achievements.

89. Teaching is almost always good or very good, and in a small number of lessons is excellent. Teachers' expert knowledge of the subject enables pupils to be stretched to think more deeply. A sixth form lesson was observed during the inspection when students were studying Samuel Beckett's play, *Waiting For Godot*, and the teacher was able to draw out questions and observations from the students about issues which are raised by the play, to do with redemption, salvation and repentance. Teachers have high expectations of all their pupils, regardless of their attainment levels, and they challenge them in lessons to work to the best of their ability.
90. Lessons are carefully planned to include a range of activities, and to cater for pupils of different attainment levels, which results in keeping pupils interested and working hard. One lesson observed was of a class of Year 7 pupils working on Browning's poem, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. The teacher had planned a sequence of activities which started with an introductory session during which she closely questioned pupils to see what they had remembered and understood, and which was followed by pupils working at three different levels on exercises to do with the poem. On the classroom walls there were lists of the vocabulary of literary analysis, such as homonyms, antonyms and synonyms, which helped to reinforce the pupils' learning. The homework which was set was suitably challenging and would have extended the pupils' learning beyond the lesson. This lesson was typical of many seen during the week.
91. Since the last inspection, the department has revised its schemes of work, and they reflect the demands of the National Curriculum appropriately. There is a strong emphasis on the teaching of literature, and the department is now in a position to extend its use of non-literary texts further. One area of particular progress over the last four years is in using information and communication technology to enhance the teaching of English. At the time of the last inspection this was an area of weakness. The department has now made some progress in identifying opportunities where the use of new technology can be embedded into the curriculum: one imaginative example of such use, which the department is piloting, is to organise an on-line conference with an author, which will give pupils the opportunity to ask him questions. This area is a developing strength of the department, and would be significantly improved still further if the department acquired a computer, for teachers to use in planning, as well as for pupils' use.
92. The department's involvement with the school literacy project has been pivotal in helping it to develop, and its emphasis on the crucial importance of literacy skills in helping pupils to make good progress has resulted in the different skills being carefully targeted and taught. Analysis of pupils' work in other subjects shows that reading and writing skills are at the levels which would be expected, consequent on the pupils' ages. Most departments have written literacy policies, and many departments promote the teaching of reading and writing through such strategies as focusing on technical language and using a range of resources to stimulate pupils' interest, such as reading texts from CD-ROMs or the Internet. In science, pupils have the opportunity to write creatively, and in art, reference books and CD-ROMs are used to encourage specialist reading.

93. At the time of the last inspection the department was considered to have effective practices in assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, and in using assessment to guide planning. It has built on these good practices in the interim, and now pupils' progress is carefully tracked and appropriate targets identified. Careful records are maintained, and teachers use these to plan their lessons. The individual targets set for pupils with special educational needs are clearly understood and monitored by teachers.
94. The department provides pupils with opportunities to have extra help, both during lunchtimes and after school. This policy contributes to pupils having a high regard for the subject. It also organises theatre visits, and teachers help with extra-curricular events initiated by the performing arts department. Dramatic productions are a real strength of the school. Pupils work with enthusiasm and with a high degree of commitment, and the finished results are popular with pupils and parents and done to as professional a standard as possible.
95. The management of the department is very strong. The head of department has high expectations and sets high standards. In the department there is a climate of openness, mutual support, sharing of good practice and encouragement to take initiative, all of which have an impact on good teaching and learning. Procedures are regularly reviewed, attainment levels are analysed, areas for improvement identified and new policies systematically put in place. The department works together very much as a team. The head of drama, too, works very effectively, and schemes of work and policies and practices ensure that pupils have good opportunities to succeed in the subject.
96. The department has made the sort of progress which could be expected since the last inspection. Attention has been paid to improving teaching, so that all lessons are good or better. Schemes of work have been reviewed and developed in line with the National Curriculum, and the use of information and communication technology has been partly addressed. The department is now well placed to extend the range of non-literary texts used in teaching, and to improve the access to literature from other cultures, which is currently under-developed.

Literacy

97. Pupils' literacy skills meet national expectations at both key stages. The school has adopted a cross-curricular approach to the raising of attainment levels in reading and writing, through the implementation of a whole-school literacy policy. Most subjects provide glossaries of specialist words which help to reinforce correct spelling, and promote an interest in language; the science department in particular making an effective contribution through the use of writing frames and of creative writing. The carefully structured development of language skills results in pupils being able to write using largely correct grammatical structures, appropriate punctuation and spelling basic words correctly by the end of Key Stage 3. Higher attaining pupils are able to write well-developed, extended accounts and develop their ideas in some depth. The progress in writing continues through Key Stage 4, so that by the end of the key stage pupils take notes effectively and can write for a variety of audiences. Throughout the two key stages, pupils develop their skills in reading aloud. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can read using appropriate expression and pace, and this continues to develop through Key Stage 4. Pupils' oral skills are a little below national expectations when pupils enter the school, with many pupils placing an over-reliance on colloquial expressions and employing a restricted range of vocabulary. By the end of Key Stage 3 most can express their views fairly confidently, using appropriate vocabulary, and by the end of Key Stage 4 the majority can put across their views convincingly in discussion. Listening skills are a strength across the school.

MATHEMATICS

98. Standards are broadly average except at Key Stage 4, where they are below average. There has been overall improvement in standards since the time of the previous inspection, particularly at the end of Key Stage 3. The overall attainment of the Year 7 entrants of 1999 is markedly higher than that of previous years and it is now in line with the national average for that stage. In 1999 there was also improvement in the results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and here too the results are now close to the national average, although there are relatively fewer high attaining girls than in the national profile. These results are well below those gained in English and science although they are in line with the mathematics results in similar schools. However, attainment on entry to the school is significantly lower in mathematics than in the other subjects.
99. At GCSE the proportion of candidates gaining grades A* to G in 1999 is in line with the national average although the percentage gaining grades A* to C is well below average for both boys and girls. The A* to C results are well below those in English and science and also below the aggregated results across other GCSE subjects. These low results stem not only from the modest attainment of the cohort on entry to the school in Year 7, but also from a series of staffing difficulties that resulted in an interrupted pattern of teaching and learning. Another unhelpful factor is the relatively low allocation of curriculum time for mathematics in Year 11. The school has a rolling programme of improving the time allocation to mathematics. The most recent GCSE results are marginally better than those at the time of the previous inspection and represent a recovery from even lower results in the intervening years. The changes are beginning to have a positive effect on attainment. In the A level results of 1998 and 1999 all candidates secured an award although the proportion gaining the higher grades A or B was below average.

100. In around half the lessons observed the pupils' attainment was mainly average or above, and in some cases well above. However, the evidence from lessons and pupils' work indicates there are more classes attaining below average levels than above. The exception is the A level course where the pupils' attainment is mainly in line with that expected for the course. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils have met Pythagoras' theorem and the concept of probability while the abler pupils can use similar triangles to solve problems. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils can solve equations in algebra, while the ablest pupils use the sine and cosine formulae in trigonometry. In the A level course the pupils' progress in pure mathematics is impeded by insecurity in algebraic manipulation. At all levels, most pupils have a reasonable grasp of number, enabling them, for example, to understand which of the four rules need to be applied to solve problems. Most pupils are insecure with mental arithmetic and many are weak in this area. The school is aware of this and mathematics teachers are devoting part of each lesson to the reinforcement of basic skills. While this recently introduced measure is well-conceived, more development is needed to ensure that pupils are helped to extend as well as maintain their number skills.
101. There is productive use of the skills of mathematics in some other subjects. Spreadsheets involving the use of formulae are developed in information and communication technology, while geography and science make effective use of statistical techniques to display data and aid analysis. Calculators are used appropriately in science, for example, in the processing of experimental data, although in mathematics lessons not all teachers are doing enough to discourage the pupils' over-reliance on these aids.
102. The girls and almost all the boys are well motivated. Their attitudes were at least satisfactory in a large majority of lessons and in half they were good or very good. This positive picture owes much to the cordiality of relationships between teachers and pupils. This was typified in a Year 7 lesson on the equivalencies between fractions, decimals and percentages, where the pupils responded enthusiastically to the demanding work presented by the teacher. Pupils' response to learning was unsatisfactory in about one lesson in every seven. This occurred mostly when the attitudes of a minority of boys adversely affected the learning atmosphere in the class. Exceptionally, in a Year 8 class of able pupils, the attitudes of a significant proportion of both boys and girls was unsatisfactory partly because the work set was not sufficiently challenging.

103. The teaching was at least satisfactory in a large majority of lessons seen and was good, very good or excellent in nearly a third. The teaching was unsatisfactory in about one lesson in every seven and stemmed in part from the school's unavoidable use of non-specialists. The most effective teaching reflects good planning that ensures a purposeful approach, clear explanations and sufficient variety of activities to ensure that pupils' interest is maintained. These features, together with the teachers' skilful use of questioning to foster pupils' thinking and understanding, were clearly evident in an A level lesson where Year 13 pupils were revisiting the topic of probability. The quality of pupils' learning correlated closely with the quality of teaching. This was apparent in a Year 7 lesson on the properties of parallel lines; the teacher's imaginative planning, her energy and infectious enthusiasm for mathematics led not only to the pupils making good progress but to their open enjoyment of the session. Pupils' learning was unsatisfactory in about one lesson in seven. In one such lesson Year 9 pupils made unsatisfactory progress because the teacher's explanations of approximating numbers by rounding were not sufficiently clear to ensure proper understanding of the process. While no unsatisfactory teaching was observed in the sixth form it sometimes happened that lessons contained insufficient stimulus; not all teachers are doing enough to help the pupils on the A level course to think for themselves and develop independence.
104. At Key Stages 3 and 4 all teachers are regular in their setting and marking of homework. The practice of certain teachers, in the frequency and thoroughness of their marking, is of notably high quality. Most pupils treat homework responsibly, although less consistently so in the lower attaining classes where response depends largely on the vigour of teachers' insistence. In the A level course not all teachers are marking homework and in this respect the pupils are not receiving sufficient help and support.
105. In this well-led department, teachers maintain detailed records for all pupils from the time of their entry in Year 7. These indicate that, since the previous inspection, rates of progress have improved particularly at Key Stage 4 and most pupils are now progressing satisfactorily. The pupils with special learning needs make generally satisfactory progress in lessons especially when additional support is provided to assist with language difficulties. However, the school has not developed the means to identify rigorously their individual learning requirements in mathematics, and consequently teachers lack this guide when focusing individual support for pupils with special educational needs. There is a shortage of textbooks; those available for class use are sometimes in poor condition and in very few classes do the pupils have textbooks loaned to them. Consequently, even when pupils are making final preparations in Key Stage 4 for GCSE entry, most lack this encouragement and support for independent study. There is no significant use of computers in Key Stages 3 and 4 to enhance learning in mathematics and in this respect the school is not meeting a National Curriculum requirement.
106. The school has taken serious account of the matters raised in the previous inspection and, for example, consequent changes in the grouping of Year 8 pupils have enabled a closer matching of the teaching to pupils' needs. The department has put strategies in place, and made reasonable progress. It is not complacent about the need to continue to raise attainment, particularly at Key Stage 4.

SCIENCE

107. Standards in science on entry to the school in Year 7 are improving. Girls and boys in Year 7 this year reached average standards at the end of Year 6. The entry standard of the current Year 9 was slightly lower than average. Girls and boys in Year 9 have made good progress during Key Stage 3 to reach above average standards in comparison with all schools, as did Year 9 last year. Standards now are as last year, well above average in comparison with the 1999 data for similar schools. Standards have improved considerably since the last inspection when they were below average. These improvements are linked to better quality teaching since the last inspection, development of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work, especially in Years 7 and 8, firm commitment of science teachers to raising standards, and pupils' own very positive attitudes to learning. Highest attainers in Year 9 are routinely using chemical symbols, and they understand the reactivity of metals through interpretation of the results of their own investigations. By experimentation they derive the equation for calculating moments and can explain their results. They understand in detail the function and microscopic structure of a range of plant and animal cells. Lower attainers in Year 9 appreciate the importance of good planning for fair testing and for valid interpretation of results in their work on forces. The improving standards of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 investigative work in the last two years is attributable to the better teaching of the four strands of scientific investigations.
108. In Key Stage 4, standards have improved since the last inspection when they were below average. The great majority of pupils in Key Stage 4 study double science and current Year 11 pupils are reaching average GCSE standards, an improvement on the 1999 results. They have made good progress during Key Stage 4, having performed below average at the end of Key Stage 3. They have already exceeded the Key Stage 4 targets set for them at that time. In GCSE examinations last year, performance was below average in comparison with all schools but above average in comparison with similar schools. The higher standards now being achieved in GCSE investigative course work is a significant factor in the overall improvements at Key Stage 4. In recent years, and in current Year 11, girls attain significantly higher than boys. Last year the proportion of girls attaining at the very highest A* and A GCSE grades for double science was above the national average for girls. No boys attained A* or A grades in the examination. Boys in Year 10, however, are currently attaining higher standards than girls in this year. The lowest attainers in Years 10 and 11 are making especially good progress. In Year 10, for example, pupils understand the relationship between resistance, voltage and current in an electrical circuit because of their excellent response to very good quality teaching, where the presentation of tasks, use of scientific language and explanation of new ideas are very well matched to the pupils' stage of learning. Lower attaining Year 11 pupils also respond very positively to the challenges set by their teacher; they identify, through interpretation of results of their investigations, that the extension of a coiled spring is proportional to the load on it.

109. Students in the sixth form reach Advanced level pass grades A to E in the four science courses but, overall, the proportion of top grades A and B is lower than it is nationally. Standards in science at the last inspection were above average, but the number of entries for science examinations is now so small that statistical comparison between standards now and then is not valid. Standards at Advanced level are now average overall and slightly higher than average in chemistry and biology. Standards are improving in chemistry and physics. Year 13 science students have made good progress overall from Year 11, when the triple and double science results were below average. Some of the best learning is in chemistry and physics when students are presented with highly challenging tasks and actively engage in mature discussion and interpretation as the results of their practical work and calculations emerge.
110. The progress of pupils overall in science is good. The best learning takes place when teachers create the time, through the efficient and effective planning of tasks and resources, to lead pupils through sustained and increasingly challenging questions to an understanding of new ideas. In these lessons, there are no distractions from the sharp focus of the lesson; there is no unnecessary copying of text and diagrams, no unnecessary repetition of prior work, no confusion because too much content has been planned which detracts from the main learning objective; and the questions challenge the full range of attainment in the class, whether it is mixed ability grouping as in Year 7 and at Advanced level, or in the highest attaining classes in a year group, for example, where attainment ranges from A* to C in GCSE double science. This very successful teaching was observed in a third of lessons and distinguishes the very good teaching from the satisfactory.
111. Where teaching is satisfactory, in four out of ten lessons, there are strengths but not enough focus and rigour in questioning to ensure that by the end of the lesson the main objectives have been learned. Consistent strengths in this large department of 11 teachers are very good subject expertise, clear communication to pupils of lesson aims, excellent management of pupils, very high standards of discipline, positive and productive relationships with pupils, frequent assessment and recording of progress and good use of homework. The overall quality of teaching is good and the standard has improved since the last inspection. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in the science department. The quality of teaching is best in Key Stage 3 where it is very good in over four out of ten lessons, and good in three out of ten. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, half the teaching is good or very good, but the proportion of very good teaching is higher in Key Stage 4 than in the sixth form.

112. The pupils' own very positive attitudes in science contribute significantly to the good progress they make. Pupils are keen to learn, their behaviour in science lessons is frequently excellent, they listen very attentively during whole class teaching and do not waste time. They proceed with practical work safely and without fuss, sharing tasks sensibly, and often engaging in mature discussion to improve their understanding. They are improving their skills of planning and predicting, of obtaining evidence, and of interpretation of patterns in tabulated results and from line graphs. It is the extent to which pupils across the attainment range make the effort to think about the new ideas presented which distinguishes very good learning from satisfactory. In Year 7 there is some good progress by hearing impaired pupils because they are well supported through signing; and the overall progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Provision for these pupils has improved since the last inspection through the re-organisation of year groups in science into sets and in the provision of the Certificate of Educational Achievement in Key Stage 4. There could be further improvement in the match of tasks to learning needs when planning lessons. Planning does not specifically meet the needs of the few pupils with English as an additional language, but in practice these pupils, where observed, are making at least satisfactory progress and sometimes good. A pupil with English as an additional language in Year 7 is making good progress in communicating in English her understanding of the properties of materials, because good quality support is provided by her science teacher and a support teacher. The department does not have a rigorous set of criteria for identifying and supporting pupils who may be especially talented in science.
113. The amount of technician support was reported as low at the last inspection and is now even lower. This is a concern, especially with the increasing emphasis on investigative work, the split site, the location of laboratories on three floors in the upper school with no lift. The term time only contracts for technicians severely restrict important work on checking and organising the safe storage of chemicals and equipment. Provision for spiritual development is not well planned, and enrichment through extra-curricular activities, use of the community and visits is insufficient in relation to science. Other areas for development include revision of the Year 9 scheme of work; better links with primary schools; target setting in Key Stage 3; improving the provision of resources, including books; and raising standards in information and communication technology because provision of computers in the department is poor. The new head of science has established a good lead in bringing about improvements in the science department. He has the backing of a strong science team committed to raising standards. Through department self-evaluation most of what has been identified for development in this inspection is already in planning documents.

ART

114. Pupils' standards by the end of each key stage are average. At each key stage these standards represent a significant improvement since the previous inspection, but there is need to sustain this progress. Pupils' GCSE results are improving in line with the national average. However, in contrast to the national trend, boys achieve overall as well as girls, although girls generally attain a higher proportion of the top grades. Standards at A level and in GNVQ art and design declined last year and were below the national average; however, the small entry means the result should be treated with caution. Inspection of the current work shows standards are now in line with the average.
115. Across each key stage pupils' learning is brisk, characterised by good concentration and interest in acquiring new skills. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are taught to research and consider alternative ideas. They often have good skills to explain, evaluate and improve their work as it progresses. Basic visual elements, such as line, shape and colour, are explored through projects that help pupils to build securely on the work they have done before. Their practical skills and appreciation of the work of artists and designers from different styles and periods develop to satisfactory standards. However, there is room for further improvement, particularly in using a wider range of two and three-dimensional media, working to larger scales and in using information technology to express ideas and research information, as these aspects are insufficiently developed.
116. Pupils' attitudes to learning are invariably good. They work hard and are keen to participate because teachers set clear tasks and give them the opportunity to find information and use it to help their designs. Pupils usually work at a good, brisk pace and respond very quickly to instructions. They are keen to help one another and share materials sensibly. Relationships and behaviour are good. Sometimes, for example, in a Year 10 sculpture lesson, there is a highly motivating mood and working studio atmosphere as pupils have an enjoyable time expressing their ideas.
117. The key factor in the improving standards and learning is the impact of good teaching, guided by frequent checks on what pupils know and can do. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when teaching had weaknesses. Teaching is now good or better in about two out of three lessons, and satisfactory in the rest. Proportionally, most good teaching is at Key Stages 3 and 4 with satisfactory teaching in the sixth form. Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and expect a lot of pupils.
118. Teachers' good lesson plans lead to projects that challenge pupils and give them opportunity to work at a pace and complexity that is right for them. Plans explain the year-on-year lesson content, and, in turn, teachers are clear about the skills they want to teach and how attainment will be assessed. This makes lessons purposeful, ensures that National Curriculum and examination syllabus requirements are covered and gives satisfactory overall curriculum provision. The modular timetable in Years 8 and 9 and the withdrawal of some pupils from parts of lessons to study a second modern language means that continuity of learning is broken. This disadvantages pupils.
119. Teachers consistently use correct technical language and refer to work by artists and designers. Pupils make good progress because they learn to talk about their

work and know that whoever teaches them, similar high standards are expected. Teachers give pupils clear explanations and most lessons have a good structure. This means they can help individual pupils and demonstrate points to the whole class. Teachers make good use of opportunities in lessons to check on pupils' progress, so that they are clear about what they do well and where they need to improve. This balance of activity and critical commentary very effectively maintains pupils' interest and means they complete work in time. Teachers regularly make good use of homework, for instance, to ask pupils to research an idea or extend lesson work. This helps pupils improve their self-study skills.

120. Good systems are in place to judge pupils' progress. An on-going record uses national criteria to show what pupils know and can do, which helps teachers track pupils' improvement over a term or a key stage. The outcomes of this guide them in deciding pupils' next stage of work and identifying where they need extra help. This is invaluable in helping teachers to make sure work challenges pupils to improve their standards.
121. A satisfactory and thorough response to the previous inspection has helped to make this a good department. The head of department gives a clear lead and knows what needs to be done to sustain improvement. Clear policies and the teachers' understanding of them emphasise the department's strong commitment to make certain every pupil has equal opportunity to make progress. The consistent teaching of basic drawing and painting skills has improved standards. The curriculum is better planned and consequently standards at Key Stage 3 and GCSE are much improved. The work set is more challenging, and assessment has improved. Leadership is now good and the clear guidance from the head of department means that teachers work as an experienced team to improve standards. Teaching is now good because checks are made to identify strengths and weaknesses.
122. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, because, although well cared for, it is somewhat cramped and in need of refurbishment, particularly on the lower school site. Although this does not have a negative effect on the planned curriculum, it does limit pupils' opportunity to produce large scale work in two and three dimensions. Balancing this, there is a good provision of staff and efficient use of resources. There are just enough art materials, except for provision for information technology, and, overall, pupils have what they need for the work they do.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

123. The majority of pupils enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment in design and technology which are below average. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in the teacher assessments in 1999 was well below the national averages and has steadily declined in the past three years. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 3 is weaker in systems and control, but it is in line or above in textiles, food, resistant materials and graphics. A concerted effort to restructure the Key Stage 3 schemes of work has begun to show an improvement of standards in most material areas. Some of the current activities still restrict the development of higher order skills and in some cases, pupils' creativity. At Key Stage 4 overall results in 1999 were in line with the last inspection but declined in 1998 and 1997; however, they are now improving, although they are still below the national average overall. The results of those pupils taking electronics and textiles were in line with the national average, but results in resistant materials and short courses in food and graphics achieved results which were well below national averages. Pupils taking full courses in food and graphics were below the national average but overall results had improved by 11 per cent since 1998. At both key stages girls did better than boys. Girls from an ethnic minority background generally are amongst the higher grades and pupils with special educational needs are attaining in line with their capability.
124. Attainment in Key Stage 4 is in line with national standards overall. Target setting is beginning to have an impact in all material areas and teachers are beginning to focus on pupils who are under achieving. Since the last report there have been several changes nationally in the format of examinations and especially in the delivery of design and technology. These changes have affected attainment and progress at both key stages. Standards in the last inspection were satisfactory or better, then results declined, but are now steadily improving.
125. Progress at Key Stage 3 was satisfactory in half of the lessons observed and good in the rest. Progress is good when pupils are challenged by interesting activities which are well structured and give deadlines for completion. A good example is in Year 7 graphics where pupils were set a designing task based on their interests. Research was done for homework and they had to complete the layout, present their design sheet to the class, survey and evaluate against set criteria in order to select the best result.

126. Progress in lessons at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory or better. It is very good when pupils are given the opportunity in textiles to design and make the costumes for the school production and simulate a real manufacturing process. The activity captured the imagination of all the group who had researched appropriate designs for their kimonos and are determined to produce quality results. Progress in lessons is least effective when pupils of higher abilities are not sufficiently challenged or when the teacher is directing the lesson in such a way that the individuals could not be creative in their ideas. Good progress is being made in developing good literacy skills via the constant reference to technical terminology and the checking of spellings and the pupils' understanding. The department has access to some information technology hardware and software and this is used effectively to develop word processing skills and desktop publishing in project work. CAD and CAM are used to develop designs in textiles and control activities are covered in Year 8. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good when they are helped by the very capable technician or the special support teachers. The special educational needs pupils have developed better practical skills than designing skills. The higher attainers are not always fully stretched or challenged, their overall progress is satisfactory.
127. Pupils' attitude to work is generally positive and in some cases very good. At Key Stage 4, pupils are well prepared for lessons and, in Year 11, work hard in food, textiles and graphics to produce quality project work. On occasions some pupils are complacent about their predicted grades and are not always aware of what to do in order to gain higher grades. Some pupils at both key stages take responsibility for their own learning and do detailed research to support their design ideas. All value the help and support given to them by their teachers and technicians. They share equipment sensibly, work in pairs and groups effectively and take care of equipment and generally clear away quickly after practical sessions. Behaviour in lessons is nearly always good. Pupils generally listen to instructions carefully and answer questions sensibly and enthusiasm was evident in some practical lessons.
128. Teaching was never less than satisfactory, and was good overall. Most teachers are competent in more than one material area. In some lessons the expectations and challenge are not as great when the lessons are too directed by the teacher as they are in lessons where pupils are given more independence. However, pupils are given very valuable experiences in the understanding of the manufacturing process in industry. There are strong links in textiles with a local textile manufacturing company, and in graphics with a furniture company. The management of pupils is given a high priority and the health and safety interest of the pupils is paramount. The assessment of pupils' work and progress is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. GCSE coursework follows closely the examination criteria and checks are made regularly on completed project work. The Key Stage 3 system of assessment is thorough but the impact has yet to be evaluated against the curriculum changes that have been made in order to help higher attainers improve. Reports to parents identify pupils' attitudes towards the subject but not always their achievements. Differentiation is evident in teachers' planning but in some cases needs to provide more support for lower attainers and more challenge for the higher attainers. Homework is set and marked regularly and, generally, is planned to support or reinforce classroom activities.

129. The management and resourcing of the two sites are effectively done. In most workshop areas stimulating displays help to encourage the production of quality work. There is a commitment by the head of department and the staff to improve the pupils' attainment. All staff are enterprising in their efforts to provide extra resources and they make good use of the local factories' waste materials and surplus hardware. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 offers a wide range of examination courses but the short courses in Year 11 only reduce the time allocation and break the continuity of the subject from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4.
130. Since the last inspection there has been an increase in the use of information technology and new schemes of work at Key Stage 3 have been developed. However, there is over duplication of work across the material areas which sometimes restricts the practical opportunities. Development planning is now detailed and covers four years. The priorities for resources have been greatly improved.

GEOGRAPHY

131. Interviews with Year 7 pupils and a scrutiny of their work show that their prior knowledge of geography is very varied. A few are able to use six figure grid references and have an awareness of geographic issues, but the sense of place and map skills of many are poor. However, most pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3 and, by age 14, attainment is above the national average. In 1999, 65 per cent of all pupils attained National Curriculum level 5 or above, and 35 per cent reached Level 6, compared with 61 per cent and 31 per cent across the country. Most pupils in Year 9 have a good sense of place and good knowledge and understanding of natural processes, for instance, rivers. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to recognise and explain relationships, for instance, the influence of rivers on settlement. More use of information and communication technology in its teaching and the introduction of fieldwork into Year 8 and 9 would help to raise attainment further. Pupils with special education needs make good progress in Key Stage 3, where teachers are sensitive to their needs and good class support is provided. These pupils would benefit further, however, from the development of teaching and learning materials that is more closely related to their needs.
132. Pupils continue their good progress into Key Stage 4 where, at age 16, attainment of all pupils is above the national average for all schools. In 1999, results were 10 per cent higher than the national average with over 64 per cent of all pupils attaining grades A* to C at GCSE. This is an improvement of over almost 30 per cent since 1997 and means that the geography results in this school have improved at a much faster rate than results nationally. In 1999 boys' results were 13 per cent above the national average. The average points score at GCSE has improved from 3.9 for all pupils in 1997 to 4.7 in 1999, which again is significantly better than the national improvement. At the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils have a good knowledge of geographic terms and can apply them to new situations, and most are able to obtain information from a variety of sources, including satellite images. Higher attaining pupils are often able to describe and explain relationships between the human and physical environment, for instance, how deforestation of the tropical rain forest leads to soil erosion and climate change. Lower attaining pupils, however, need more practice to attain these skills and would benefit from more use of information and communication technology to aid their understanding of geography. Some higher attaining pupils do not have well-developed skills of interpreting and analysing information and making reasoned judgements.

133. Many students begin their study of geography in the sixth form with a modest GCSE background and find the challenges of studying at this level great. Attainment, however, at Advanced level grades A to E is above the national average for all schools and has been for the last three years. In each of the years 1997 to 1999, geography students achieved a 100 per cent pass rate when the national pass rate was around 90 per cent. However, attainment at grades A and B is well below the national average. No student attained a grade at this level in 1999 compared with a third of students nationally. This represents a decline from the two previous years. Many A level students are able to interpret geographic information presented graphically and Year 13 students have a good knowledge and understanding of processes and patterns, for instance, the changing nature of settlement in the British Isles. However, the very low knowledge base of some students, particularly in Year 12, prevents them from developing an understanding or appreciation of many concepts in the subject, especially in relation to atmospheric processes. Attainment at this level is also impeded by an underdevelopment of learning materials and teaching approaches which are suitably pitched at the needs of all students in the group, of a poor attitude to learning of some, and by insufficient use of information and communication technology.
134. The attitude of pupils to their learning is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. In the great majority of lessons, pupils are attentive, courteous and ready to take part in the lesson. Most show a real enjoyment of the subject and are keen to ask and answer questions. Relationships in the vast majority of lessons are good. However, some pupils are poor listeners and become inattentive when the teachers talk for an undue length of time. In some sixth form classes, students are compliant rather than eager learners and, on occasion, disrupt the lesson through immature and inappropriate behaviour.
135. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen. In a half of all lessons teaching is good or better, and in nearly a third it is very good. All teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of geography, which they transmit to pupils through lively and stimulating explanations and skilful question and answer. The vast majority of lessons are well planned with a good range of interesting activities that are well matched to the ability of the pupils. In some lessons, however, high attaining pupils are not always stretched through searching question and answer and extension work to class activities. Class management is very good. There is a calm, orderly atmosphere in all geography classes, which does much to encourage learning. Teachers make good use of the very limited resources available to them, but there is sometimes over use of text book exercises and worksheets. The use of information and communication technology at all key stages is severely underdeveloped and is holding back further improvements in attainment. All teachers of geography have the class management and teaching skills to use successfully a wide range of teaching approaches. The department would benefit from developing more interesting and imaginative ways of encouraging pupils to learn, such as greater use of group and pair work, role-play and simulation exercises. Pupils' work is regularly and accurately marked and teachers give clear advice to pupils as to how they can improve. Target setting has been introduced into Key Stage 4, and although it has contributed to the increase in the GCSE grades A* to C, it has yet to have an effect on raising attainment of the higher attaining pupils both in Year 11 and in the sixth form. The monitoring of pupils' work against clear targets and the intervention by the department when underachievement is identified is not yet well enough developed.

136. The department has made very good progress at raising standards since the last inspection and is well placed to take these improvements further. It is well led and managed. The head of department sets a high personal example to colleagues in his commitment to raising standards. This vision is shared by all members of the department who work extremely well as a team, sharing ideas and giving support where needed. The head of department monitors the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observation, which is used well to share and disseminate good practice in the department. The department would benefit, however, from making its targets for improvement more explicit, and clearly stating the strategies needed to reach these targets.

HISTORY

137. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is just below the national average and at the end of Key Stage 3 it is broadly in line with the national average. The results of the National Curriculum assessments in both 1998 and 1999 were below national averages. This picture is not reflected in the work of pupils currently in Year 9, which is broadly in line with the average. Discussion with teachers and the scrutiny of pupils' work suggests that the National Curriculum assessment results are insecure and represent an underestimation of pupils' attainment levels. Results at GCSE are below the national average, but the average points score has risen over the last three years. The average performance of pupils currently in Year 11 indicates that standards are continuing to rise. Girls achieved much higher standards than boys in 1999 but a similar scale of difference was not reflected in the work seen during the inspection. The size of the cohort entered for history is below average but numbers are increasing steadily. Standards have been below average over the last three years at A level, but the work of Year 13 students shows attainment which broadly matches the average.
138. Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Progress is faster in Years 8 and 9 than in Year 7 where, although progress is satisfactory overall, its extent is restricted by a lack of consistency and rigour in the development of historical skills. In Years 8 and 9, pupils make rapid progress and achieve standards which are in line with the average. Their knowledge and understanding of topics studied are sound and, in the case of higher attaining pupils, it is good. There is also sound development of historical skills, especially those of chronology, empathy and the use of historical source material. Pupils use sources effectively to gain information but their skills in their close analysis and judgement of their reliability are less well developed, apart from in the case of some higher attaining pupils. These skills are significantly hampered by the need for pupils to use poorly reproduced materials in the absence of text books. Literacy skills develop well with good development of well-structured extended writing.

139. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 and achieve standards which match the national average. Knowledge and understanding deepen and historical skills improve. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate good knowledge, a secure grasp of complex issues and apply their historical skills effectively, especially those of chronology, empathy and source based investigation. For instance, pupils in a Year 11 lesson confidently discussed the relative usefulness and reliability of a range of historical evidence in their study of the relationship of Truman's doctrine and the Marshall Plan. They thought deeply and applied their knowledge well in making links and drawing well-substantiated conclusions. Average and lower attaining pupils also achieve well in comparison with their prior attainment at Key Stage 3, but in many cases their oral work is better than their written work. However, overall, literacy skills develop well and most pupils use numeracy skills competently in the analysis and presentation of information.
140. At A level students make good progress and achieve well in relation to their standards at GCSE. Progress is strongest in Year 13 where students work hard, constantly engaged in thinking and undertaking tasks which required effort, concentration and perseverance. Their knowledge and understanding at this level are sound and in the case of higher attaining students, good. They are often used most effectively in lively debate and cogent argument. Historical skills become well developed with students working a mature level of interest and involvement. Written work reflects sound research in the majority of cases, but that of higher and lower attaining students varies considerably. In the case of the latter, work is not as detailed, well-balanced and supported by evidence. Progress in Year 12 is slowed by the immature and often negative attitudes of a minority of students.
141. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, though at times their progress is slowed by materials not being sufficiently well matched to their learning needs. Those with English as a second language make good progress, being well supported in lessons. The most able pupils make good progress responding with relish to tasks set but they are not always fully stretched because their learning requirements are not clearly identified.
142. The teaching is good. In the lessons seen during the inspection it was good or better in 60 per cent. In nine per cent of lessons it was very good. None of the teaching observed was less than satisfactory. The great majority of pupils respond very well to high levels of challenge. This is particularly evident at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The level of challenge is more variable at Key Stage 3 - especially in Year 7 - where there are some instances of under achievement because undemanding tasks are set. Pupils usually work hard and concentrate well, but where the teaching is not challenging and presents too few opportunities for their active participation, they work compliantly rather than with enthusiasm. Good relationships and behaviour contribute strongly to the good learning ethos in all lessons.
143. The response is particularly good in Year 13 where the teachers' very good subject expertise inspires students to develop a mature interest and enthusiasm for history. Learning at all stages is well supported by good subject expertise which facilitates clear teaching, well adjusted to provide an appropriate level of challenge and to meet the learning requirements of pupils of different ability and at different stages of learning.

144. Pupils' positive response and progress are enhanced in many lessons by a good range of well-timed learning activities. However, teaching styles vary considerably across the department and in a number of cases they are safe and sound rather than challenging and inspirational. For example, in a Year 11 lesson focusing on the Cuban crisis, while the lesson was carefully planned to meet its objectives, there was too little opportunity for pupils to learn through the discussion of issues. They were obliged to work in a compliant mode because of the over direction of the lesson by the teacher, though the limited oral contributions of many showed a good grasp of key issues and a good basis for lively discussion. In general, too little use is made of group work to enable pupils to study issues in depth and to learn from each other. This contrasts with the very good teaching seen in Year 13 where the high level of challenge in the teaching and good opportunities for in-depth discussion led students to be deeply and intellectually involved in their learning.
145. Pupils' progress is assessed and recorded carefully. There is, however, some inconsistency in the use of performance data to set targets for improvement, especially at Key Stage 3. Work is marked regularly with written comments to help pupils to improve their standards. Sometimes, however, these are too brief to be helpful, especially in the case of higher attaining pupils. Homework is used well as an integral part of learning to extend learning and to prepare for the next stages of study. It is valuable in promoting study skills and pupils' responsibility for their learning, especially at A level.
146. The department is well led and managed within difficult circumstances. Realistic targets are set for improvement within a systematic cycle of review and development planning, which includes the monitoring of work and lesson observation. Teachers are well supported in this process. However, the provision of a clear and coherent direction for work in history is complicated by the fragmented nature of staffing and accommodation, and the low level of resources. The head of department and all the teachers of history have other responsibilities within the school - many at a very senior level - which distract their attention from the needs of the department. This has a significant and adverse effect upon a united drive in development planning, especially to improve standards. The provision of accommodation for history in the two sites is poorly managed, resulting in difficulties for the management of the department, especially in the effective use of resources and in establishing a presence for the subject in the two buildings. The low level of funding results in too much use of worksheets, which hinders the development of both historical and study skills. These difficulties are not supportive of improvement. Since the last inspection there has been relatively little change. Then, as now, the development of analytical skills at Key Stage 3 is variable. Teaching still varies in quality and until very recently, there has been no clear trend of improvement in attainment.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

147. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment in information technology which are below the average of pupils of a similar age. Attainment in the teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 was well above the national average. The number of pupils gaining level 5 or above was approximately 82 per cent. These levels were higher than 1998 and considerably higher than 1997. Girls did much better than boys in 1998 but were only slightly better than boys in 1999. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 3 is below the national average in the current Year 9 but in line with expectations in Year 7 and 8. The attainment of Year 9 has been affected because of major problems with access to hardware last year.
148. At Key Stage 4, only a few candidates were entered for the examinations in 1999 and the group gained 50 per cent A* to C grades, a great improvement on the previous year's results. Seventeen pupils took information systems examinations in 1997 and 70 per cent gained A* to C grades. Attainment in GNVQ lessons at Key Stage 4 is above national averages. The attainment of pupils taking the GNVQ information technology skills course is dependent on their capability, but attainment is mainly in line with national averages.
149. Progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and occasionally good. The lack of opportunities for pupils to practise their information and communication technology skills in other areas of the curriculum is having an adverse effect on their general capability. English and design and technology do, however, use information and communication technology in a variety of ways to enhance the pupils' learning experiences. Design and technology is the only subject that contributes to Key Stage 3 assessments via their control module in Year 8. The change in delivery in Key Stage 3 is now proving to be beneficial in Year 7 and Year 8, and the future plans to equip another information technology room in the lower school will help to increase access for whole class groups.
150. Progress at Key Stage 4 is good for the GNVQ pupils, who benefit from the good teaching. They are clearly focused on completing their targets for assessment. The majority has competent keyboard skills and one pupil articulated his ideas clearly to the class about the use of information technology within industrial systems. He chose to show the benefits and disadvantages of designing electronic circuits by computers. The progress of lower attainers in the GNVQ information technology skills class is satisfactory, but skills in listening to instructions carefully are weaker. The use of spreadsheets to record information, for example, about sales of CD players, is generally accurate but each stage of development requires careful guidance from the class teacher and technician.

151. Progress across the curriculum is better at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Pupils are encouraged to use information and communication technology for their project work in English, design and technology, and history. Mathematics and science use graphical calculations occasionally and data logging in physics. In music, pupils make use of the Internet and use multi-tracking for composing and recording. Spreadsheets are used to present charts in geography and CAD and CAM are used effectively to produce designs in textiles. Progress is hindered by the lack of available hardware and software within departments and the difficulty of access to the network rooms. Several departments have little or no detailed planning within their schemes of work as to how information and communication technology is to be delivered.
152. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are very keen to learn, and show great interest and good powers of concentration when working on the computers. Several of Year 9, especially the girls, lack confidence and competence. Pupils in Key Stage 4 taking the GNVQ course are very well motivated and take responsibility for their own learning by following the assessment procedures closely and making their own individual action plans. The GNVQ skills course is valued by most pupils as an opportunity to develop information technology skills further but the lower attainers have difficulties listening and following instructions. Pupils of all ages respect the guidance and help given to them by the teachers and technicians. The information technology room for Key Stage 3 pupils is small for full classes, but despite having to share equipment, pupils generally behave in a sensible and responsible manner.
153. In the lessons observed teaching was never less than satisfactory, some was good and one lesson was very good. The new courses currently being taught at Key Stage 3 follow the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, and with the help from design and technology staff, who teach control work, cover all aspects. The tasks are relevant to the pupils' experiences but in some cases pupils are not always too enthusiastic, especially when they are not fully challenged or the pace of the lesson is slow. Lessons are planned to teach specific information technology skills and most lessons include appropriate technical vocabulary which the pupils are expected to learn and understand. Teachers are patient and give good guidance but do not always stimulate the more able or provide quality support material for the less able. Occasionally, demonstrations and explanations are too lengthy. All teachers, including the supply teacher, are very supportive of the pupils, as are the highly valued technicians. The marking of work is against National Curriculum criteria at Key Stage 3 and is carried out at the end of each project. Sometimes areas for improvement are identified but on pupils' reports attitude is given priority over attainment. Pupils in Year 10 are not fully aware of their levels of attainment in Year 9. Key Stage 4 assessment carefully follows the examination criteria and pupils are shown what to do to gain higher grades. Teachers try to raise expectations by charting results in the classroom in an effort to develop a spirit of competition. Staff expertise is increasing but some staff still need greater competence and confidence.

154. Since the last inspection separate information and communication technology lessons have been introduced for all pupils at Key Stage 3 replacing the modular system. At Key Stage 4 the change in courses to GNVQ information technology and the provision of an information technology skills course for all pupils has been effective in raising standards. Assessment needs are now more clearly focused but planning is not in place to involve other areas of the curriculum to contribute at Key Stage 3.
155. The management and co-ordination of information technology have been affected by insufficient resources. Pupils are now taught the basic skills and all now need to have the opportunity to practise these skills. The management of the taught information and communication technology curriculum is satisfactory but overall cross-curricular co-ordination is not yet well enough developed. Although a great deal of planning has been done, a clear vision of how these plans are to be implemented is still to be developed. There is the need to work with departments to plan in detail the delivery of ICT within subject lessons in order to improve pupils' capabilities. Staff capability is mainly adequate but their competence to deliver and assess work against the National Curriculum guidelines is much weaker. Some training needs have been addressed but a detailed audit is required to support staff in the use of subject specific software. There is still a lack of resources, though the recent new hardware is a considerable improvement. The lack of access and the shortage of up-to-date software remains an on-going problem. Plans are in place for the purchase of hardware for the lower school and currently there is very little hardware designated for the use by special educational need pupils, though software is available.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

156. Standards at Key Stage 3 have recently been assessed at above the average National Curriculum level 4 in French, the first modern language. These assessments are very misleading. At Key Stage 4 standards in GCSE are well below the average for both maintained and similar schools, both in numbers entered and in standards reached. In French in 1999 only a quarter of the year group were entered and of these only a third obtained grades A* to C. This is 13 per cent below the figure for all maintained schools and no higher than that for secondary modern schools.
157. German results in 1999 show an A* to C success rate higher than in French, but very few pupils were entered. Results in modern languages overall are consistently amongst the weakest in the school for both boys and girls. Few boys take the examination and the gap between their performance and that of girls is wider than that nationally. Since the last report standards have fluctuated but fallen, in contrast to improvement in other subjects. Similar to 1995, most pupils follow a one-year course, but, as in the full course, standards are below other subjects in the school and, at grade F, below the national average by at least one grade. The proportion of pupils not entered for any modern language examination is high.

158. Progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs progress well because appropriate setting enables them to learn effectively. Higher and average-attaining pupils in Year 9 make satisfactory, and, in some classes, good progress in German as their first modern language because teaching is effective in these classes. They can link statements in the past tense to describe their activities the previous weekend, and, in a class survey, ask each other questions about their favourite sports. Others, taking German as the second language in Years 8 and 9, make limited progress but achieve well on only one lesson a week. Boys in particular show increasing confidence in these classes. However, many pupils in Year 9 underachieve. They lack determination and perseverance in response to challenge because they are not used to high demands being made of them. Contrary to the impression given by recent teacher assessments, attainment in class and current work is below the national average, more than one National Curriculum level below where it should be. Only standards of listening comprehension are at expected levels. Pupils can say set phrases with the support of text, but higher attainers do not speak enough from memory. When they read, pupils typically do not recall vocabulary or see links with their previous learning. Too many lower attainers can write only words and do not extend these into sentences, and too many average attainers do not link sentences into short paragraphs. Higher attainers write accurate paragraphs in the past tense but their writing overall lacks the expected richness of a wider range of structures.
159. Progress at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. Attainment seen in Year 11 is similar to that shown by previous years' GCSE results. On the full course, a few higher attainers speak and write securely within a limited range of structures. Their overall understanding of speech and text shows progression to higher level GCSE. In Year 11 French some achieve well, at grades C/D in speaking, as in the lesson in which they gave rehearsed commentaries to a class fashion parade. As at Key Stage 3, however, speaking is very inhibited. Typically, pupils struggle to form present tense endings, ask questions and pronounce accurately. They do not cope well with the unfamiliar or use the language freely other than in well-rehearsed phrases. Some of these pupils, and many on the short course, underachieve because expectations of them have been far too low. As result of a combination of unsatisfactory attitudes and below average attainment in Key Stage 3, the GCSE requirements are too demanding for them in the limited time available in a short course. Pupils with special educational needs lose the ground they make in Key Stage 3. Classes in Year 10 are far too large for planning to be effective for their needs.
160. Pupils' attitudes and the quality of their learning are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. Some pupils in Year 7, the top sets in Years 8 and 9 and some lower attainers in Year 9 are keen to learn. Behaviour is good, very good in Key Stage 3, and relationships are constructive. Pupils prefer writing to speaking but listen to each other well in pairs. They usually work hard in class but, in general, are not enthusiastic. Many pupils from Year 8 onwards show little care over the presentation or completion of written work. By Year 10 many have little interest. These pupils make little effort to organise their work so that it might be of help for revision. Self-confidence is low and pupils are not used to taking initiatives in the language, in either speech or writing. Lack of ambition and effort stem from the knowledge that it is possible to discontinue learning a language at the end of Year 10. These attitudes do not support learning well. Some teaching compensates but not well enough.

161. Teaching is sound overall, and in a quarter of lessons seen it was good or very good, especially in Key Stage 3, but the weaknesses are significant. At its best, in Year 8 beginners' German and in lower attaining French in Year 9, expectations are high, the pace is brisk, and pupils learn very efficiently through being active and hearing the spoken language continuously. Other teaching is not so effective. Teachers have sufficient knowledge of the foreign language for Key Stage 3, but in Key Stage 4 some have insufficient expertise in using the spoken language to develop pupils' listening and speaking skills to required levels. They compensate to some extent through sound planning with clear objectives, good management of behaviour which makes expectations very clear, and some adequate teaching of basic literacy skills. They usually use homework effectively to reinforce and extend what has been learnt.
162. In general, however, expectations of pupils' achievement at all levels are far too low, so that pupils do not acquire knowledge and understanding fast enough. Teachers move too slowly through the planned scheme of work. Pupils often start the year with the previous year's text book, which has a demotivating effect. As a result pupils, especially higher attainers, progress too slowly through National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. Speaking develops slowly and pupils do not memorize sufficiently. At each key stage pupils learn structure but over a narrow range. Teachers use a range of methods, but they lack variety and are determined more by the text book than by pupil need. Use of learning aids is limited. Recordings of French television provide an authentic stimulus, but overhead projectors are not used to establish meaning and there is very little use of computers. Sometimes there is too little opportunity for pupils to learn actively because the teacher takes too long to set up the activity. On other occasions, teachers misjudge the difficulty of new learning and do not provide sufficient interim steps to help pupils understand. As a result, the typical pupil is very dependent on the teacher's explanation. One reason is that teachers do not use routine assessment well enough to inform either their own planning for individual pupil need or the pupils themselves. Key Stage 3 pupils have insufficient knowledge of their learning. A satisfactory start has been made in Key Stage 4 in keeping pupils informed of their progress and what they need to do, but the standard of marking in all years is too variable. The mark scheme is unhelpful and not applied consistently. Some pupils' work is marked very infrequently.
163. Some unsatisfactory and ineffective teaching is one reason for low standards and levels of interest, but there are others. Firstly, subject leadership has been weak in recent years. Few of the issues raised in the last report were addressed until recent months. Secondly, the motivation and continuity of learning of many pupils in both key stages have been impaired by many staff changes over the past year. Thirdly, in Key Stage 3, curriculum provision is unsatisfactory. Time allocated for the second modern language is inadequate, promoting neither progress nor high standards. The timetabling arrangements for it deny second language pupils access to the full curriculum. In Key Stage 4 provision is poor in the short courses which most pupils take, and it is not promoting high standards. Continued low standards further depress the subject's status, acting as a disincentive to pupils in Key Stage 3.

164. There has been little progress in response to the last report until recently. The acting head of department has worked very hard and successfully to bring unity and stability to the department, and has substantially improved documentation. Under new leadership, and with stronger, more flexible staffing, the department has the capacity to meet its important agenda for improvement. In order to raise standards, the following action is needed: improve curriculum provision to enable all pupils to achieve appropriately; improve schemes of work to ensure faster progress, better planning for different needs, and clearly identified assessment and information and communication technology opportunities; improve teachers' knowledge of assessment criteria and use data more effectively in monitoring of pupils' progress, planning and feedback; improve the monitoring of teaching.

MUSIC

165. Standards in music at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils explore and develop ideas and use given guidelines, refining effects to create successful compositions. By discussing and demonstrating important features they show they understand their work, although few readily use technical language. Pupils in Year 7 created suitable introductions and endings and devised appropriate rhythmic patterns for the melody of a medieval processional piece. In Year 9 pupils correctly used call and response for pieces based on traditional samba drumming. Performing at the end of the key stage is satisfactory. Most pupils have developed listening skills which enable them to maintain an independent part and co-ordinate with other players in ensemble work. Only a small number of pupils read staff notation easily. Keyboard skills are not fluent, and pupils are hindered in developing proper technique by sitting on chairs which are too low for a proper playing position. Higher ability pupils make good progress both in composing, where they develop ideas imaginatively, and in performing where they develop fluency, control and expression. In exploring variations on a given theme, such pupils created interesting, complex variations correctly co-ordinated with underlying harmonies and played sensitively and expressively. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in music, learning to concentrate and to value and develop their natural abilities. Pupils in a lower ability group in Year 8 readily grasped the concept of sequencing melodic phrases and were able to produce attractive, well phrased melodies.
166. GCSE results are in line with national averages, although relatively few pupils attain the highest grades. Performing is a strength, with the majority of pupils performing at a good level, a creditable achievement in view of the relatively low numbers learning to play orchestral instruments. Composing is satisfactory. Most pupils improvise well and can apply guidelines to create logical pieces. However, compositions at the end of the key stage are largely restricted to the genre of popular music and only one or two higher attaining pupils explore other styles.
167. Pupils are well motivated and co-operative. They make very good use of opportunities to work in groups, developing tolerance, sensitivity and initiative. They are careful with equipment and considerate for one another's safety when carrying instruments around. As an audience they listen closely and are appreciative of one another's efforts.
168. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. Teaching was identified as a strength at the last inspection and this

is still the case. Particular strengths are in clear short and medium-term objectives, good use of on-going assessment which informs lesson planning, and very good management of pupils and resources. Pupils' musical development is at the centre of virtually every lesson, and secure subject expertise and enthusiastic communication are constant features. Pupils are given clear explanations and know precisely what is expected of them in each activity. Expectations are appropriately high, but there is realistic awareness of efforts made by pupils who have particular learning difficulties. Problems arise with consistency both in lesson content and in using assessment criteria in the department. Clearer identification of objectives and more rigorous monitoring of teaching are required to ensure that all pupils benefit equally. More time needs to be given to singing.

169. Since the previous inspection and in spite of interruptions to continuity in staffing until recently, the quality of education provided by the department remains sound, and trends are towards further improvement, particularly in the areas of pupils' personal development, independence and imaginative and sensitive development. Extra-curricular activity is a strong feature. Well over 100 pupils are involved in musical productions and currently pupils are developing a production based on Chinese music and traditions. The school's entry for the national JC2000 competition has reached the regional finals. Efforts to increase the uptake of instrumental lessons should be maintained. Crucial to this and to raising standards further within both key stages is improved liaison between primary and secondary schools so that fuller information about pupils' achievements in primary school is provided and continuity across the curriculum is maintained.
170. Although improvements have been made to the accommodation for music in the upper school; in the lower school auxiliary accommodation still gives cause for concern. The condition of rooms in the bungalow block is poor and supervision is difficult, while the use of a science laboratory which has very poor acoustical properties and inadequate audio equipment is inappropriate for music teaching. The provision for information technology is unsatisfactory on both sites and requirements for teaching this element of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 cannot be fulfilled.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

171. On entry to the school most pupils are attaining at a level below national expectations. Teacher assessments in Year 9 in 1999 indicate that the proportion of pupils achieving at or beyond national expectations is higher than the national average. The current Year 9 pupils are working at the national expectations rather than above. There are no significant differences in relation to boys and girls. In lessons, most 14 year olds attain national expectations in games such as hockey and netball. In the latter, for example, girls have a secure grasp of the principles and techniques of marking, and in hockey, boys have a secure range of individual and teamwork skills such as, for example, the ability to create successful pass and move situations. In dance, pupils understand the need for quality in their movements but they have basic weaknesses in, for example, suppleness, sense of rhythm and timing. Many are thus still working towards the national age related expectations. All pupils have a secure understanding of the need for appropriate warm-up and are able to take responsibility for leading it.
172. In lessons in Key Stage 4 most 16 year olds achieve the national expectations in the games and activities taught. In health related fitness activities girls, for example,

have a secure understanding and application of fitness exercise routines. Boys have good tactical awareness in small-sided basketball games, as well as making informed choices as to whether to use one-on-one or zone defence principles in a game. Some boys show a lack of stamina in Year 11 and the limited amount of timetabled general physical education is not helpful in this respect. In Year 10 trampoline lessons the higher skill levels of those pupils taking GCSE physical education is having a positive impact on standards in the general physical education course.

173. Small groups of pupils have had the opportunity to follow the GCSE dance course and the first group took the examination in 1997. In that year the A* to C grade passes were below national averages and in the following year they were above. In 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grade passes at 33.3 per cent was well below the national average of 48 per cent.
174. In lessons and extra-curricular activities pupils work well together and show respect for each other's capabilities. This creates a positive atmosphere and promotes successful learning. Though no pupils with special educational needs were observed with additional help, they are well supported and integrated in lessons and make progress in line with their capabilities. All pupils consolidate previously learned skills and acquire new skills and techniques as a result of well-planned and structured progression in practical lessons. The great majority of pupils arrive on time, change quickly and are ready to start. The few non-participants have valid reasons for this, though they are not always as fully involved as they should be. Sometimes they are not included in the introductions, demonstrations or summative sessions. This means they are not fully prepared for participation in the next lesson.
175. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is sound with no differences between the key stages. In seven out of ten lessons the quality is sound and in three out of ten lessons the quality is good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection and is having a positive impact on attainment, the quality of learning and the progress pupils make. The clear planning and structure of lessons show that teachers have secure subject knowledge and understanding. All lessons have a focus and learning objectives that are shared with pupils at the start. The variety of activities in all lessons ensures that pupils concentrate and stay on task and are encouraged to be productive and work at a good pace. In a Year 10 GCSE dance lesson pupils were involved in composing, performing and evaluating. This clearly helped them to stay on task, develop their ideas of duo and trio composition and gave them greater insight into the stress on quality required by the teacher.

176. All teachers successfully boost confidence and motivation by conveying the idea that everyone can succeed in practical lessons. At the same time they have high expectations for discipline and behaviour. Tasks and the level of challenge set in most lessons are well matched to the physical capabilities of all pupils and therefore they are all able to make progress. The clear introductions ensure that pupils are aware of what is expected of them. In good quality lessons, skills are clearly demonstrated and broken down to make pupils more aware of what is expected of them and what they have to do in order to make progress. Effective and realistic drills are also helpful in this respect. In a Year 9 boys' hockey lesson, for example, this was effectively done when teaching the skills required for pass and move and also in a boys' Year 10 trampoline lesson when introducing the half twist into front drop combination of moves. When pupils are fully involved in planning, performing and evaluating, they gain greater insight into what they are doing and it provides challenge. However, in many lessons, pupils' involvement in pair work coaching and peer evaluation is insufficient. For example, in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, pupils could have had more responsibility in this respect and in another Year 9 boys' hockey lesson pair work coaching was set up by the teacher but then the pupils were not given enough opportunity to evaluate one another.
177. Teachers pay due regard to safety and ensure that pupils are warmed up before taking part in physical activity. Year 9 pupils, for example, are encouraged to take responsibility for aspects of their own warm-up, as well as being encouraged to name the muscle groups being stretched. This prepares well those pupils who later opt to take the GCSE course in Key Stage 4. Effective questioning not only allows teachers to establish the extent of pupils' knowledge and understanding, but also encourages speaking and listening skills as well as the use of correct terminology. In a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, for example, teachers displayed key words and discussed their meaning with pupils. This supports the whole-school literacy policy.
178. Teachers circulate well in practical lessons and their effective and timely intervention ensures pupils make progress and understand further what is expected of them. The good use of praise, encouragement and constructive criticism thus ensures pupils are becoming aware of their capabilities. Sometimes, at the end of lessons evaluations tend to be mostly by teacher comments and directed questions rather than pupils being asked to explain their perceptions of what they have learned.
179. Appropriate homework is set and marked for the GCSE pupils. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of marking of both homework and class work. The quality of the use of comments is variable; thus pupils are not being made aware of the progress they are making or of what they need to do to improve.

180. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 for the general course is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum though the time allocated is limited. This is now enhanced by the provision of GCSE physical education in Year 10, as well as dance at Key Stage 4. There is limited provision for physical education in the sixth form through the activities programme. This means that students' learning and their physical well-being are not being well enough developed. The range of extra-curricular activities is good and further enhances pupils' learning. These include recreational as well as a range of competitive opportunities. As a result of the continuing dedication and enthusiasm of staff in supporting extra-curricular activities, individuals and teams have had success at district and county level in a variety of games. The department has developed manageable assessment procedures and is now well placed to develop these further so that they meet the new levels to be introduced later this year. The quality and range of indoor accommodation at the lower school limit the range of activities that can be taught. Thus, for example, the standard of badminton of pupils in Year 10 is low because of a lack of prior experience in the lower school. At the same time, though, the large sports hall at the upper school is underused.
181. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Under the guidance of the headteacher, a clear focus on the quality of teaching, and the development of appropriate quality schemes of work has resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, as well as an improvement in standards in physical education. There still remain, however, areas for development to improve further the physical education provision and to continue to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning. A programme of sharing good practice in teachers' specialisms would help improve the quality of teaching and learning. The time allocated to the Key Stage 4 general course makes it doubtful if the depth of coverage will be sufficient for all pupils to reach the national expectations by the end of the course. Staff have yet to attend training for the teaching of GCSE physical education to ensure they are fully prepared for the teaching and assessment demands of the course. The management structure of the department lacks clarity because the status of dance within physical education or performing arts has yet to be defined.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

182. In religious education, pupils do not yet reach the levels expected by the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus. Pupils enter the school with varying levels of religious knowledge but there is no reliable data to measure this. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have some basic knowledge about Christianity and major world faiths. They recognise, for instance, some of the special features of places of worship, festivals and ceremonies to do with marriage and birth. Higher attaining pupils have a better grasp of the facts and use technical terms more accurately than others. Few pupils have good understanding of the deeper significance of religious ideas and nor are they skilled in evaluating and responding to questions of human experience.

183. At Key Stage 4, the GCSE short course was introduced in the current academic year. In both this course and the non-examination course provided for all, pupils attain at too low a level, that is, of recognising main facts about religion and most do not reach the standard expected. There is insufficient evidence to judge the attainment of sixth form pupils who attend the religious education activities introduced this term.
184. There is no significant variation in attainment of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language at either of the key stages. Standards have not improved enough since the last inspection when they were described as better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4.
185. In both key stages, most pupils build to some extent on their knowledge about religious faith and practice but not well enough to acquire a good breadth of knowledge and secure understanding of the rich variety of ways in which different faiths are expressed. At Key Stage 4, some GCSE pupils of higher and average ability have made reasonable progress in extending their knowledge of Islam. Some pupils in Year 10 have progressed, for example, to recognising some of the rituals of prayer and pilgrimage. More able pupils could comment, albeit briefly, on some of the elements of belief that Christians and Muslims have in common. However, at both key stages, pupils of all levels of ability do not make enough progress to good levels of critical skills, as there is not enough planning for this.
186. At both key stages, pupils' attitudes to their learning are satisfactory overall and often good. Relationships are generally good. In Year 7 and 8, most listen and sustain concentration on their work. Some offer answers to questions, although sometimes the questions do not probe their understanding enough. Year 9 pupils, for example, were interested in the question of arranged marriages in Islam and several offered suggestions about possible disadvantages but there was less stimulation of ideas about possible advantages and significance for Muslims. Standards of behaviour in class vary; most pupils are well behaved but in some classes there is too much social chat unrelated to the task in hand, especially where the work is undemanding. Most pupils do what is asked of them. Few take the initiative and learn by asking searching questions, or by making links with their previous work or their own experience, particularly when the activity is uninspiring and tasks encourage copying.
187. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and there were some good lessons but a fifth of the teaching is unsatisfactory. Both the very good and the unsatisfactory teaching occurred at Key Stage 4. Relationships and management of pupils' behaviour are good and most lessons have an atmosphere conducive to learning. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and use this to explain the material so that pupils grasp the main points. At both key stages, the teaching generally enables pupils to gain some religious knowledge but, except in the best lessons, it is not usually fully effective at either stage in providing sufficient challenge in the learning activities to enhance pupils' deeper understanding. Where the very good teaching and learning occurred, Year 10 pupils were interested by some works of religion in art, and challenged to work together on interpreting meaning and symbolism, as well as to make a personal aesthetic response.

188. Where teaching and learning were unsatisfactory, for example in a Year 11 GCSE class, the pupils were engaged at slow pace in very easy, unsuitable tasks, naming charities and identifying basic human needs for survival. Lack of planning of suitable activities for pupils with varying needs also limits the learning for pupils of all abilities. The department has a poor range of learning resources on which to draw and pupils almost always use dull worksheets. The opportunity for good learning was significantly hindered, for example, in work at Key Stage 3 on Hindu marriage, where there were no resources available to illustrate the excitement, vibrancy, and colour involved in such ceremonies. Marking of pupils' work is usually carried out but there is not enough comment to ensure that pupils know how to improve. Nor are opportunities for independent writing and assessment tasks planned well enough to move pupils forward in their understanding and development of skills.
189. Pupils' current standards and achievements are impeded by a number of factors outside the teaching. Provision of time at both key stages is lower than that recommended to enable them to learn in the depth required by the Agreed Syllabus. Until this year, following the promotion of the former head of department, there has been difficulty in recruiting a replacement. However, the new head of department has worked very hard since September to improve the learning opportunities provided for pupils. Priorities for development have been soundly identified and planning for new schemes of work to reflect the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus is underway. The school has also improved provision to some extent at Key Stage 4 with the new GCSE short course. Time for the non-examination course, however, remains too low to support high attainment, and statutory requirements for the sixth form are not met.