

INSPECTION REPORT

DE LISLE ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Loughborough

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120304

Headteacher: Mr. F. Fay

Reporting inspector: Mr. C. Sander
4151

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

Inspection number: 185955

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Thorpe Hill Loughborough Leicestershire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J. Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	6 th November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr. C. Sander	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils or students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Mr. J. Brasier	Lay inspector		Pupil's attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr. T. Bailess	Team inspector	English, Drama	
Mr. B. Hartman	Team Inspector	Mathematics	How well does the school care for its pupils or students?
Ms. P. B. Fyans	Team inspector	Science	
Mr. P. J. Scott	Team Inspector	Science Sixth Form	
Mr. G. Rayner	Team Inspector	Information Technology	
Mr. D. Rogers	Team Inspector	Art	
Mr. M. Butterworth	Team Inspector	Physical Education Special Educational Needs	
Ms. J. Marshall	Team Inspector	Modern Foreign Languages Equal Opportunities	
Mr. M. Gill	Team Inspector	Geography Sociology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
Mr. M. McGregor	Team Inspector	Design Technology	
Mr. G. McGinn	Team Inspector	History, Economics	How well is the school led and

		Business Studies	managed
Mr. P. Priest	Team Inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The De Lisle Roman Catholic school is a large, voluntary aided, mixed comprehensive school for students in the 11-19 age range, situated in the town of Loughborough in the north of the county of Leicestershire. There are currently 1223 students on roll, of whom 160 are in Years 12 and 13. The school provides the only continuous 11-19 education in the county. It has strong links with local teaching training establishments with 18 students currently involved in initial teacher training.

Although students attend the school from a very wide area of North Leicestershire, the majority come from one of seven Roman Catholic primary schools in the area. The school is over-subscribed as parents value most highly the standards it sets and the care that it provides. It has grown in size by 5 per cent since the last inspection. The school population is generally stable with only incidental movement of students. The students are nearly all of white, United Kingdom heritage and the number for whom English is an additional language, 0.2 per cent, is below average. Sixty-seven students, 5.5 per cent, are eligible for free school meals. This is below the national average and similar to the position at the time of the last inspection. There are currently 151 students on the special needs register of whom 45 are at stages 3-5 of the Code of Practice. This is below the national average. Twenty-four students have statements, an increase of 66 per cent since the last inspection. Current census information concerning the immediate locality of the school does not provide an accurate picture of the socio-economic circumstances of the students. There is a degree of social disadvantage within the North Leicestershire area, and particularly within the Colville area, from which approximately one quarter of the students come. Overall the socio-economic circumstances of the students is broadly average. Students' attainment on entry since the last inspection is above average; the attainment of the most recent entrants to the school is well above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good. Standards are well above average at the end of Key Stage 3, in GCSE and in Advanced level GCE examinations. Results have been well above average, and have got even better, since the last inspection. Students achieve particularly well in GCSE and GCE Advanced level courses. Eighty-six per cent of its students last year continued their education beyond the age of 16. Of these, approximately half did so at the school. Eighty-one per cent of students in Year 13 last year have entered higher education.

The school expects and promotes high standards of behaviour, working in close partnership with its parents to develop its students into mature, thoughtful young adults by the time they leave the school. The quality of teaching is high with much that is very good and some that is excellent. Unsatisfactory teaching is a rarity. Since the appointment of its new headteacher, some eighteen months ago, the school has very effectively addressed its budget deficit with minimal effect on the continuity of its students' education. Although these circumstances have restricted opportunities for longer term strategic planning, the immediate priorities of the school are well managed, targets are in place and there is a high degree of commitment across the school to raising standards further.

The school's income per student is low. It is very successful in continually raising the standards of its students between the ages of 11 and 16. Its provision for students in Years 12 and 13 is very cost effective. Spending is slightly less than its actual budget share in this area whilst it continues to raise its already well above average standards. It allocates its budget at each key stage in line with its income. Although, given its low income, group sizes in some lessons are large, regularly good teaching results in well above average standards. Available management time is limited but the school is led effectively. For these reasons, the De Lisle School gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school fulfils its published aims very well.
- Standards at the end of each key stage and in Years 12 and 13 are well above the national average and also well above the average for similar schools.
- Students achieve particularly well in GCSE and GCE advanced level examinations.
- It sustains well above average standards over time.
- It has improved these standards since the last inspection.
- The school promotes and supports high standards of behaviour and very effective personal development through its very good support and guidance arrangements.
- It provides a high proportion of good and very good teaching.
- It makes very good provision for its students' moral and social development.
- It builds a strong partnership with its parents.
- It has developed very effective target setting arrangements at Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13.

What could be improved

- Information technology needs to be taught to all students at Key Stage 3.
- Target setting needs to be developed at Key Stage 3 to help achieve even higher standards
- There is a need for a greater emphasis on strategic planning in the work of the senior management team and the governing body.
- The school development plan needs to include more effective arrangements for monitoring and evaluation.
- Job descriptions and appraisal arrangements need to be renewed in preparation for performance management.

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. Standards have continued to rise further since that time at all key stages and in Years 12 and 13. The weaknesses in numeracy at Key Stage 3 have been overcome. The gap between the standards reached by girls and those reached by boys in GCSE examinations has halved, running now at about 10 per cent. The school has improved its assessment arrangements. The average size of teaching groups has remained similar to that at the time of the last inspection, as also has the percentage of time that teachers spend teaching lessons. The more recent problems arising from the deficit budget have been resolved and the school is now in a much healthier financial state. Many of the accommodation difficulties remain.

The school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. Most of these concerned management. Roles and responsibilities have been reviewed at a senior level and a start has been made to promote the management as well as the leadership role of heads of subject.

Partly because of the pressing need to address current financial difficulties, there has been insufficient attention given to strategic planning and the school development plan requires thorough revision so that it can support more effectively the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. Although there is no whole school policy on teaching, good practice has been supported by a developing programme of regular classroom observation in order to assure quality of provision and support staff development.

There have been improvements in the curriculum. Lesson time has been increased to 25 hours. Art is now offered in all years at Key Stage 3 and every student now follows, with a high degree of success, a course in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4. Drama has become well established as a GCSE examination course and decisions have been taken to provide an additional element of subject choice at Key Stage 4. However, the school still does not meet fully statutory requirements for information technology at Key Stage 3.

Procedures to record attendance, including the use of optical mark reader facilities for registration, now provide a greater degree of accuracy to inform its monitoring.

The school has improved further its arrangements to monitor progress through challenging target setting at Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13. This supports well the school's continuing drive to reach even higher standards.

Recent appointments and changes within the governing body have brought a renewed commitment to be involved in the long term strategic development and still further improvement of the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
End of Key Stage 3 tests	A	A	A	A

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

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
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	B	A	A	

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

Results are consistently well above average in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and have improved since the last inspection. Both girls and boys reach well above average standards. The girls' standards are higher but the gap between the boys and girls is narrowing. The proportion of students gaining 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE is also well above the national average. The proportion gaining 5+ A*-G is above the national average and broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Standards overall at the end of each key stage are well above the average for similar schools. The proportion of students gaining 5+ A*-C has risen by nearly 10 per cent over the last four years. This is double the national trend. Students who have special educational needs achieve well.

The average points score in the Advanced level GCE examinations at the end of Year 13 is well above the national average and has improved by nearly 20 per cent over the last four years. Results in some subjects fluctuate from year to year. In 1999 they were well above average in chemistry, mathematics, economics and business studies. They have been below the national average for the last three years in physics but have improved steadily over the same period in art.

The high quality of much of the work seen during the inspection confirms that, overall,

standards at the school are above average. By the end of Key Stage 3, above average standards were evident in English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. When comparisons are made with what students knew, understood and were able to do at the start of Year 7, achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Standards were lower in art and in some lessons on resistant materials in design and technology. By the end of Key Stage 4 well above average standards were seen in many lessons in mathematics, business education, physical education, food technology and geography. Students achieve well at Key Stage 4, doing particularly well in geography and business studies. In Advanced level courses standards in many subjects were well above average and their level of achievement was good.

The school has set targets, based on prior attainment, for students at the age of 16 and 18. These are suitably challenging and the work seen during the inspection confirms that they are on line to meet them.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Nearly all students have a very positive attitude towards their school, their studies and each other. These very positive attitudes contribute to high standards.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in nearly every lesson. There is occasional restlessness in some Year 9 classes. Most students participate eagerly in lessons and other activities. This does not diminish as they get older. Similar good behaviour is very evident at break time, during lunchtime and when students arrive at and depart from the school.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is good. They become increasingly alert and responsive to the needs of others. Their relationships with each other and with adults are nearly always cordial.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. At 92 per cent it is just above the national average and similar to the levels at the time of the last inspection.

Students expressed very positive attitudes about their school during the inspection. They value, as do their parents, the sensitivity and strength of the support and guidance that they receive. Their positive, mature attitudes are much in evidence in lessons and contribute significantly to the successes they achieve in lessons, national tests and public examinations. The rate of exclusions is below the national average and there were no permanent exclusions in the twelve months prior to the inspection. Although many students travel a considerable distance to the school, attendance is just above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Good teaching is a strength of the school. Many staff are very experienced, highly knowledgeable and skilful in organising their students' learning. They prepare them very well for public examinations. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection. It was good or better in two-thirds of lessons and in just over one in every five lessons teaching was very good or excellent. Three per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. Teaching was slightly better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 and the

highest proportion of very good teaching was observed in Years 12 and 13. The quality of teaching was most consistent at Key Stage 4. Teaching in English is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In mathematics and in science, teaching is good at both key stages.

Many teachers are highly skilled in structuring their lessons to maximise students' learning. This was a particular feature of the best teaching in science and geography. It was a consistent feature in the high proportion of very good teaching in modern foreign languages. Much of the good teaching in many lessons actively involves students' interest and sustains their concentration by engaging them in discussion or probing their understanding through effective questioning. Occasionally in art lessons, between the ages of 11 and 16, teaching lacks such vitality.

On the rare occasions when teaching was unsatisfactory, time was lost, the pace was slow or the task too complicated for the students to tackle. Occasionally, the teaching methods for mixed ability classes were unsuitable in English at Key Stage 3.

The consistent application of assessment criteria linked to National Curriculum standards at Key Stage 3 is insufficient to inform progress and target setting at Key Stage 3.

Many teachers make good use of, and also develop further, their students' above average literacy and numeracy skills, although there are no whole school policies to promote consistent practice.

Setting arrangements in many subjects help teachers to match work to the particular needs of their students. The teaching of students who have special educational needs is good at both key stages, combining effective withdrawal and in-class support. Provision is less effective for the small number of talented students.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall provision is satisfactory with some improvements, particularly at Key Stage 4, since the last inspection.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Provision is good. It is well managed, combining an appropriate balance of withdrawal and in-class support.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Provision is effective when the occasion arises. There is no current need to make permanent provision.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision for students' personal development is good. It is very good for their moral and social development and satisfactory for their spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils.	The school cares very well for its students and their personal development is well supported by the highly effective pastoral management.

Improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection have included the teaching of art in all years at Key Stage 3 and an examination course in information technology for all students at Key Stage 4. There is a good range of advanced level courses in Years 12 and 13. Statutory requirements for information technology are not fully met at Key Stage 3. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, all of which are of good quality. Provision for sporting activities is very good.

In the small number of instances that occur periodically, provision for students with English as an additional language is effective. There is good liaison with the local education authority and individual staff and students also voluntarily provide additional help

Provision for students' social and moral development is very good. The provision for their spiritual development, as distinct from their religious education, as also for their cultural development, is just satisfactory. There is insufficient attention given to planning and co-ordinating such opportunities in schemes of work across all subjects.

The school cares very well for its students, providing a safe and secure environment. Induction arrangements at the age of 11 are very good. Very good guidance is offered to students when they are preparing for public examinations, including additional support at lunchtimes, individual interviews and mentoring.

The school works very well with its parents, providing them with a good level of information. The very effective partnerships that it builds result in a high level of direct involvement in the life of the school. However, the well-established and much valued parent teacher association and school newsletters are not used for consultation concerning curricular provision and major spending decisions.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The overall leadership of the school is good. Its management is satisfactory. The headteacher provides effective leadership. Team work is good. Pastoral leadership and management are both very good. Subject leaders need to develop their management skills further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is supportive but only recently has it started to involve itself directly in school improvement and strategic planning. It has been diligent in its oversight of the school's finances and managed admissions appeals well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Current arrangements are unsatisfactory although the new headteacher has introduced procedures to monitor the quality of teaching. There are no appraisal arrangements in place.
The strategic use of resources	Arrangements are sound with clear priorities to maintain staffing levels at a time of financial austerity.

The headteacher and his senior colleagues, in partnership with the new chair of governors, have started to develop a more strategic approach to the management of the school. However, the school development plan does not support effective evaluation of the school's decisions and actions. The work of subject and pastoral leaders needs greater co-ordination to assure consistency. Subject leaders need to become subject managers.

Governors and senior managers have worked very well together within the finance committee in order to remedy the school's financial deficit. There have been several recent changes in the composition of the governing body. There is now a greater readiness not only to support but also to steer the strategic direction of the school.

The school's spending priorities, as also the experience profile of the teaching staff, result in an above average expenditure on staffing within a budget that is characterised by a low level of income per student. Spending plans have successfully addressed the need to rectify a deficit budget over a two-year period. Expenditure on learning resources has increased and the number of available computers is increasing. Provision is now close to recommended levels. The quality of library stock is good but is below recommended levels for a school of this size. There is no strategic plan for further improvement. There are significant current shortages in accommodation.

Although the principle of best value is a feature of tendering arrangements, it has not yet been rigorously established within the financial planning and evaluation arrangements by senior managers and governors.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress that their children make. • The high quality teaching. • The high expectations it has of all its students. • How the school guides their children to become mature, confident, responsible young adults. • The ease with which they can raise issues with the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of parents would like to see improvements in the school reports. • A similar number would like to see the homework policy applied more consistently. • They would like to see improvements in the current accommodation. • Some would like to see a wider range of additional activities.

The inspection team confirms these views. Many students make good progress during their time at the school as a result of the very effective teaching in which high expectations are a significant feature. Parents' and carers' appreciation of how the school promotes their children's personal development is well founded. Reports do need improving so that parents and carers have a clearer idea of what their children do well and where they need to improve. There needs to be sharper reference to the standards expected in the National Curriculum.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Students perform well above the national average in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Standards have risen since the last inspection and the school has sustained a high level of performance over the last four years. In 1995, just over three-quarters of the students reached the national expectation in English, just over half did so in mathematics and three out of five students in science. In the 1999 national tests, 85 per cent of students reached the national expectation in English, 86 per cent did so in mathematics and 72 per cent in science. Students exceeded their teachers' assessments in mathematics and English but not in science.
2. Both boys and girls have performed consistently well above the national average in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Girls continue to perform better than boys. The trend in improvement over the last four years for English, mathematics and science, was broadly in line with the trend nationally. Results in science dipped slightly in 1999 but there has been a slight but steady improvement year-on-year in the other two subjects. Girls have increased their levels of performance at a slightly higher rate than boys in English and their standards have been rising at a significantly faster rate in mathematics. The further rise in standards of both boys and girls has been less marked in science.
3. Results in the Key Stage 3 national tests have been consistently well above the average for similar schools in English and mathematics. The slight dip in science results in 1999 still produced results that were above average for similar schools.
4. Attainment on entry in these three core subjects is well above average. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced standardised testing on entry. More than two-thirds of students perform at an above average level in these tests. Their results at the end of the key stage indicate that satisfactory and sometimes good progress is being made.
5. Since the last inspection, teachers have been required to complete statutory assessments for all of the other National Curriculum subjects. In 1999 standards were well above average in design and technology, history, geography and music. They were above average in modern foreign languages and physical education. Standards in art were just above the national average. No results were reported for information technology.
6. The school has maintained well above average standards in many of these subjects over the last three years and there has been a trend of further improvement in history and geography. Results in geography are particularly high with more than a half of the students performing above the national expectation. The results of approximately one-third of students are very high. Students' good standards of literacy and numeracy contribute to these very good results.
7. Girls have consistently performed better than boys in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, art and music. Boys and girls reach similar standards in physical education by the end of Key Stage 3.
8. The quality of work seen during the inspection broadly confirms these standards.

Above average standards were evident in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history, geography and physical education. Standards broadly in line with the national average were seen in the small number of music lessons seen during the inspection. Average standards that were slightly lower than those indicated in the most recent statutory assessments were seen in design and technology and in art.

9. Given the above average standards on entry to the school and what one might, therefore, reasonably expect them to be able to do, students' overall achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. They achieve well in mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. In these subjects teaching is particularly effective. Achievement in information technology is well below the national expectation. Students develop their computer skills to some extent in science and have some further opportunities to word process their work in English. However, because the subject is not taught at Key Stage 3, they achieve below the national expectation.
10. In the 1999 GCSE examinations performance was well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Sixty-six per cent of students obtained 5+ A*-C grades. This was well above the national average of 48 per cent. It was also well above the average for similar schools. The proportion obtaining 5+ A*-G grades was above the national average and broadly in line with the average for similar schools. The results of both boys and girls were well above the national average for their age group and to a similar degree. Girls did better than boys, gaining approximately 10 per cent more grades A*-C. The proportion obtaining at least one grade in the range A*-G was well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. The rate of improvement has been ahead of the national trend. The rate of improvement has been double that nationally. An increasingly high level of performance has been maintained over the last four years with a significant improvement of nearly 10 per cent in the proportion of students gaining 5+ A*-C. There has also been a significant further rise in the standards reached by girls between 1998 and 1999 when their average points score rose from 44.2 to 52.2. Boys are also doing better. The gap between the boys' and girls' standards has reduced by 50 per cent since the last inspection.
11. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-C in English, mathematics and science was well above the national average. It was well above the national average for similar schools in English and mathematics and above the national average in science. Standards were above the national average in business education, design and technology, drama, English literature, geography, history, German, French, music, religious education and sociology. Standards were below the national average in art, information technology and the single award science course, followed mainly by lower attaining pupils.
12. Over the last three years there has been a rising trend in standards across many subjects. There has been a particularly marked improvement in modern foreign languages and there have been consistently above average results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, with a further rising trend in the first two of these. Results in food technology have been well above the national average and rising over the last two years. Results in English literature, business studies, drama, German and French have risen from just below to well above the national average. Very high standards have been sustained in geography, sociology and music. History has consistently performed above the national average.

13. When comparisons are made between how students perform in their different subjects, they perform particularly well in geography and business studies. They also do well in science, design and technology, French, history, mathematics, music and sociology. They do relatively less well in art, information technology, drama, English, English literature and German.
14. Boys perform particularly well in geography, French, business studies and science. They do significantly less well in art than in their other subjects.
15. Girls also do particularly well in geography and well in science, design and technology, history mathematics and French. They similarly do less well in art, English, English literature, German and religious education than in the other subjects that they study.
16. Students achieve well, and sometimes very well, in GCSE examinations. The school has started to use nationally available statistics to analyse the progress made between the ages of 14 and 16. These show that students make very good progress in English and mathematics and good progress in science. Girls make overall good progress in these subjects although further analysis indicates that in English girls make slightly slower progress than might have been expected. They make good progress in mathematics and science. Boys make good progress in English and very good progress in science.
17. Over the last three years, boys and girls have both improved their standards further in English, science, business studies and French. The standards of boys have also improved in drama and art but have declined in mathematics and history. In no subject have girls' standards declined or even fluctuated and there has been a trend of further improvement in geography, mathematics, English literature, German and history.
18. These standards were reflected in much of the work seen during the inspection. Well above average standards were observed in many mathematics, business education physical education, food technology lessons, as well as in the analysis of students' written work. Above average standards were seen in all other subjects except in art and information technology where they were broadly average.
19. Students who have special educational needs achieve well at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in geography, physical education and modern foreign languages. They do particularly well in science. In modern foreign languages they participate orally with great confidence at both key stages. They show a marked improvement in their writing skills in both key stages, moving well into joined script and writing very neatly. Where possible these students are entered for GCSE examinations or the Certificate of Achievement. Many achieve very well. In Years 12 and 13, two students reach standards similar to others in their teaching group as their particular, additional needs do not directly affect their learning. Effective additional classroom support and the use of individual education targets by their teachers support their progress well.
20. The average points in the Advanced level GCE examinations in 1999 was well above the national average. It has risen from 16.5 in 1996 to 19.9 in 1999 and the three- year average is also well above the national average. The 1998 results were particularly impressive when the average point score was 23.1.

21. In many courses studied at GCE Advanced level there is a high proportion of either boys or girls. In 1999 candidates in biology, physics, mathematics, economics and business studies and geography were mainly male; in art, English literature, French, and history they were mainly female. Standards, in terms of the proportion of candidates obtaining grades A or B were well above average in chemistry, mathematics, economics and business studies and above average in art, English literature and French. They were below average in physics, design and technology and well below in history. Results were close to the national average in sociology and English language and literature.
22. Within these subjects standards frequently fluctuate over time. This is due in part to the differing size of the teaching group, the attainment levels of students on entry and, sometimes, a change of teacher. These fluctuations in standards have been particularly marked in chemistry, mathematics and history. Some subjects, for example art, show consistent improvement over the last three years whilst standards in physics have been below average during the same period. Overall, the three year trend across all subjects is one of continuing improvement at a rate of approximately 7 per cent per annum.
23. Overall achievement in Advanced level GCE courses is high. There are some inconsistencies between subjects and the range of achievement is very wide in general studies. When advanced level grades are compared with the same students' performance at GCSE, higher attainers achieve particularly well in geography and sociology and well in English literature, biology and history. The small number of higher attaining students in design and technology achieve well. Their achievement is less consistent in physics, mathematics and chemistry. Middle attaining students achieve well in history, satisfactorily in physics and sociology but inconsistently in mathematics and unsatisfactorily in design and technology. They also achieve less well in biology. Lower attaining students sometimes struggle on Advanced level courses, particularly in chemistry and sociology and to some degree in history. They achieve satisfactorily in geography.
24. In work seen during the inspection standards in Years 12 and 13 were above average overall. Such standards were seen in English, mathematics, science, art, geography and modern foreign languages. They were broadly in line with national averages in design and technology, history, information technology and physical education. Students achieved well in English, mathematics, science, art, information technology and modern foreign languages. Achievement was satisfactory in design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education.
25. The continuing improvement in standards in the Advanced level GCE examinations owes much to the careful guidance offered to students, the challenging and supportive teaching that meets the needs of a wide range of abilities and the well managed target setting arrangements. As a result, overall, students achieve well in their GCE Advanced level examinations. Middle attaining students achieve satisfactorily in physics but there is some inconsistency in their achievements in mathematics. Higher attaining students achieve very well in sociology and well in English literature, history, geography and biology. There is some inconsistency in their achievements in physics and mathematics. In general studies higher attainers achieve satisfactory standards but there is a very wide range of results amongst middle attaining students.

26. Standards in literacy are above average. Many students use their skills well and develop them effectively as they progress through the school. Frequently in lessons, their very good oral skills enable them not only to answer questions at length but to discuss issues and thus develop their understanding. The writing skills of the majority of students are above average and these support both effective note taking and extended writing which is frequently well organised, particularly in the work of higher attaining students in many subjects. Students enter the school with above average literacy skills, judged on the basis of scores in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2. From this good beginning, most make sound progress. Standards in reading and writing are good throughout the school.
27. The English Department promotes literacy standards well. Effective practice was also identified in a range of other subjects during the inspection. Literacy skills are well developed in geography, with a wide variety of written assignments at all key stages. These include reasoned arguments on a range of issues, supported by appropriate advice on how to structure and illustrate essays. A good range of writing tasks was similarly seen in history and RE. Literacy is further encouraged by structured learning of vocabulary and grammar in modern foreign languages. Teachers pay close attention to the marking of errors in these subjects. In science, spelling and the appropriate use of technical vocabulary is taught systematically. In music, creative writing in response to music heard also provides some focus for literacy work at Key Stage 3.
28. Best practice does not apply consistently, however. There is no policy in the school for teaching literacy across the curriculum, and no co-ordination of the work. There has been no related in-service training for the staff as a whole.
29. Standards of numeracy and mental number skills in mathematics are satisfactory. The mathematics department, in line with the good practice established by the *National Numeracy Project*, encourages students to learn their multiplication tables. Most mathematics lessons, in Key Stage 3 and Key stage 4, begin or end with a short mental mathematics test or numeracy activity. A whole school numeracy policy is planned, which will reflect the *National Numeracy Project* now adopted by primary schools. Number skills appear to be stronger in Year 7 and Year 8 than in older students who did not benefit from the numeracy project whilst at primary school. In fact several lower attaining Year 9 students use finger counting for calculations such as 9 add 6.
30. Students are able to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects with a measure of success. In no subject is progress inhibited by lack of the appropriate numeracy skills. In geography, business education and economics a range of skills in data handling is deployed, especially in economics and business education in Key Stages 4 and 5. Pattern work, including symmetry and enlargement is encountered in art. Modern foreign languages teachers use numbers to count and enumerate. Scope to use and display students' abilities in number, graphical, recording and measuring skills are evident in other subjects including science and physical education. In Year 10 graphics, students are able to construct ellipses and tangential circles. At Key Stages 4 and 5 students use information technology to handle and present data. Food technology has aspects of weighing and measuring embedded in it. However, in other subjects there is little encouragement for students to display their numeracy skills.
31. No departments include guidance in their scheme of work to suggest how their

subject can support the development of numeracy

32. Although students have some opportunities to develop their skills in information and communication technology, their teaching is not co-ordinated across subjects at Key Stage 3. As a result, standards are below average and were not reported within the 1999 statutory assessment arrangements for all students at the age of 14.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

33. Nearly all students have a very good attitude towards their studies, their school and each other. Relationships and attitudes are strengths of the school that have grown still stronger since the last inspection. Behaviour remains good and attendance is satisfactory. At 92 per cent, it is just above the national average. This is similar to the level at the time of the last inspection. Statistics are more accurate than at the time of the last inspection as a result of electronic recording arrangements. Nearly all students enjoy school. They expressed very positive views both informally and during planned discussions that formed part of the inspection. They participate in most lessons and activities with an enthusiasm that does not diminish as they grow older, confirming views expressed by parents at their pre-inspection meeting. They are keen to answer questions and when asked what they would like to change about their school they formulate creative ideas rather than complaints. They invariably speak positively about their teachers and the quality of their lessons: such mature, positive attitudes contributing significantly to the successes they achieve in lessons, national tests and public examinations. Many boys and girls value the friendliness of their teachers and appreciate the sensitivity and strength of the support and guidance that they receive. The example that adults set within the school, reflecting closely its stated aims, results in a high degree of mature behaviour both within and outside lessons. Students' self-discipline is nowhere more in evidence than at change of lessons. The one-way system is respected and a very large student population moves with a minimum of fuss within very confined areas, under the watchful but unobtrusive eyes of staff.
34. There are occasional exceptions to this very positive overall picture. The generally very good standards of behaviour are occasionally spoilt by pockets of thoughtlessness, mainly, but not always, in lessons. During the inspection these occurred mainly in Year 9, where some students, mainly boys, demonstrated an uncharacteristic lack of maturity, particularly when lessons lacked pace. Defiant behaviour is a rarity; only one instance was observed during the inspection. Instances of fixed-term exclusions are low and there were no permanent exclusions during the twelve months prior to the inspection. Nearly all students are polite to each other and to adults. They treat the fabric of their school with care and graffiti are extremely rare. Inevitably in such a large school there are some isolated instances of bullying but students and their parents value highly the swift intervention and usually effective resolution of such problems.
35. More characteristic of the students' mature behaviour, values and attitudes is the respect they have for each other and their appreciation of how their behaviour might affect others. In lessons, for example, there is no scoffing at wrong answers or ignorance. Many demonstrate a readiness to help others who might struggle otherwise with their work, particularly those students who have special educational needs. When arriving, and particularly when departing by bus from the school, students behave in a very mature manner, mindful of the need to ensure each other's safety.

36. The personal development of students is very good. Those in Year 11 have opportunities to act as prefects and help with the supervision of lunchtime arrangements. There are regular opportunities to support charitable functions and many students give generously, both financially and with their time. Students in Years 12 and 13 give valued help to younger students who have special educational needs and when a Polish refugee entered the school with virtually no English several Polish speakers promptly volunteered to give up their break times and lunch times to help her. Students' initiative, team work and independence is often much in evidence in the best taught lessons, particularly in physical education, modern foreign languages and food technology.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

37. The high quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Many teachers are not only very experienced and knowledgeable about their subject but also highly skilled in organising students' learning so that they achieve well and reach high standards. In the 173 lessons seen during the inspection the overall quality of teaching was good at Key Stage 3, at Key Stage 4 and in the advanced level courses in Years 12 and 13. Many teachers show a high degree of professional skill in preparing their students for public examinations. The high expectations that they nearly always set, particularly for students beyond the age of 14, combined with well-managed guidance and support that includes very effective mentoring and target setting, promote and combine with students' high degree of motivation in order to produce standards that are well above the national average at the end of each key stage.
38. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons. It was good or better in two-thirds of lessons. Just over 1 in every 5 lessons was very good or excellent. Three per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory; a similar proportion was excellent.
39. Teaching was slightly better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 and the highest proportion of very good teaching was observed in Years 12 and 13. The highest proportion of good teaching, over 70 per cent of lessons, was seen in Key Stage 4. When teaching students between the ages of 14 and 16, many teachers are highly skilled in structuring their teaching to maximise results. This was a particular feature of the best teaching in science and geography. As students become more mature they become more confident in their writing and oral skills, they are more able to exercise initiative and work independently. The best teaching in many subjects, and particularly at Key Stage 4, built upon these strengths. There were wider variations in the quality and effectiveness of teaching at Key Stage 3 and in Years 12 and 13. The quality of teaching was higher in Year 12 than in Year 13 partly because there was greater emphasis on final examination preparation in the older students' lessons. There was a similar tendency at Key Stage 4 where the teaching was good in four out of every five Year 10 lessons but in three out of five lessons in Year 11.
40. Teaching in Years 12 and 13 was very good in science and modern foreign languages; it was good in art, mathematics, history, geography, information technology and physical education. It was satisfactory in design and technology and physical education. In the oldest students' lessons teaching was sometimes too didactic. As a result they remained too passive, for example in some Advanced level mathematics lessons, in one theory lesson in physical education in Year 12 and in one lesson on Irish history in Year 12 where students were given insufficient

opportunity to develop their skills in handling the very well prepared sources. In the best teaching in Year 12, in sociology for example, students engaged in lively debate and discussion, challenging ideas presented to them and thus sharpened their understanding of complex issues. In another example of very good teaching, in economics, the teacher pushed students to think for themselves. Within this very carefully prepared lesson middle attaining students were challenged very effectively to reach a higher standard of work. In the best teaching in Year 13, in science for example, highly skilled teaching enabled students to review previous errors in their mock examination answers, promoting awareness of flaws in their understanding whilst at the same time sustaining their confidence. High quality learning and excellent attitudes were also evident in a Year 13 art lesson where students were totally engrossed in their practical examination, demonstrating initiative, enthusiasm and independence in their work; qualities that they felt had been encouraged by the very effective teaching and preparation they had received.

41. The quality of teaching was most consistently effective at Key Stage 4. It was very good in modern foreign languages, and frequently so in science. In all other subjects, except art, where it was satisfactory, the quality of teaching was good. Of the 67 lessons observed, nearly three-quarters were good or better and nearly 1 in 5 was very good or better. As at Key Stage 3, there were two examples of excellent teaching seen in modern foreign languages. The high quality teaching that students receive in many subjects between the ages of 14 and 16 has many strengths. There were fine examples of well-paced, well-structured, highly effective teaching in modern foreign languages where the use of time was particularly well organised and expectations were suitably high for all students. The clarity of learning objectives and the very good organisation of a series of activities within the lesson were also strong features in the best science lessons. Students understood clearly what needed to be done and the well prepared activities helped them to sustain a good degree of concentration throughout. In design and technology a good degree of independent working was encouraged as students made clocks and in information technology the very effective teaching methods encouraged a high degree of autonomy whilst at the same time providing very good specialist knowledge upon which students could draw as the need arose. In a French lesson the teacher encouraged and, in turn, capitalised upon the students' eagerness to raise the quality of their use of the *passé composé* to a high level for middle attaining students. Rigour and high expectations, combined with a high degree of mutual respect and positive relationships, were significant features of some very good teaching in English as students were encouraged to support their literacy analysis with specific reference to the text. A particularly strong feature in the teaching of English at Key Stage 4 are the very good assessment arrangements. These enable students to have a very clear idea of the standard they are currently reaching. In food technology, in Year 10, students made very good progress and achieved very well when completing a 'ready meal' assignment within the clearly stated deadline. The structuring of the task over a series of lessons, the well organised support and high level of teacher expectation combined to bring the very best out of the students. They thus shared their teacher's high standards and in turn shared the results with pupils from another class. This was a model of good teaching and learning.
42. Many subjects have particular strengths in their teaching methods, some of which might easily transfer across subjects. For example, good use is made of audio visual equipment in history and geography to stimulate interest and increase understanding. It promoted a good level of concentration and good listening skills in modern foreign languages. Such effective use of resources was less evident in

English. There is a need to analyse more rigorously what works and why in order to establish a whole school policy on effective teaching.

43. Teaching at Key Stage 3 was good in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. It was satisfactory in English, art and music. Whereas the quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 4 benefits from a very good understanding of the examination assessment criteria, the application of clear assessment criteria to inform progress and target setting is less well established at Key Stage 3.
44. In 77 lessons observed at Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching was very good in nearly one quarter and there were two examples of excellent teaching in both modern foreign languages and physical education. The most successful lessons were those in which students were actively engaged within well-structured tasks. Many of these were of a practical nature. Where learning was brought to life, as in modern languages, design and technology, physical education and practical science activities, the quality of learning was invariably good. In the most effective teaching in Year 7, particular attention was given to deciding the most appropriate methods that would promote and develop students' skills as active learners. In a very successful history lesson well-planned research tasks developed students' skills in selecting and recording information and the teacher's highly effective management of the class enabled students to take charge of what they had to do. Similarly, in a physical education lesson, students were given a clear indication of what needed to be done but they were then given ample opportunity to make decisions as they devised and evaluated their own exercise regimes. The teacher valued the ideas of the students, encouraged their active participation throughout and skilfully guided them towards a critical response at the end of the lesson. In a French lesson, the enthusiasm engendered by the teacher resulted in solid learning of new phrases combined with much fun and laughter as, in an almost party atmosphere, students used simple phrases and appropriate vocabulary to give presents to each other. As a result they fully appreciated the value of learning another language. In a Year 8 textiles lesson and a food technology lesson the very good teaching was characterised by careful planning and well-paced development of the lesson. The brisk start in both instances established quickly the subject matter of the lesson and, through very effective questions to promote discussion, students' understanding was extended. As in many of the French lessons seen, the teacher took particular care to involve the boys so that they appreciated the relevance of what they were being asked to do. By emphasising team work in the food lesson, the teacher skilfully promoted students' personal development as well as their intellectual and creative understanding. Similarly, highly effective teaching and successful learning were also seen in a Year 9 swimming lesson. The experience was enjoyable but also had a clear purpose which was shared with the students. The very good planning ensured that they continued to improve their technique throughout. In a very good mathematics lesson, high attaining students were continually challenged and very effective questioning promoted the students' active participation. As a result their understanding was continually deepening as the lesson progressed. The very good relationships between the teacher and students in many mathematics lessons gives them confidence to ask when they do not understand and to be confident in trying to work out the answer. This contributes to their regularly good progress.
45. Only a very small number of occasions where teaching and learning were unsatisfactory. In Year 8, time was wasted at the start of one physical education lesson and the tasks were too complicated for the students to handle; they sustained a positive attitude but gained little in terms of developing and applying gymnastic skills. A rare instance of unsatisfactory pupil management and slow pace

resulted in unsatisfactory teaching in one science lesson of all boys. Teaching was also poor on one occasion in music when the usual teacher was unable to take the lesson and inappropriate work was set.

46. The teaching of students who have special educational needs is good at all key stages. Two very experienced teachers withdraw students on a regular basis. These arrangements are very well planned and employ a range of methods to promote confidence and develop skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy. As a result, the need to withdraw students reduces as they complete Key Stage 3. A particular strength of this provision is the opportunity given to students to plan and assess their own work. This promotes their personal development and contributes to their above average levels of achievement. Learning support assistants provide effective help for these students, particularly in food technology, physical education and science.
47. A small number of parents raised some concerns about homework. Overall, inspectors found that homework was being set regularly. Although there were instances of 'finishing off' in mathematics, many homework assignments were planned to reinforce or extend understanding of what had been covered in class.

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

48. There has been satisfactory progress in improving the range and quality of learning since the last inspection. Curriculum time has increased by one hour and forty minutes to a 25 hour week. The time provided for art and technology has increased and is now satisfactory. A discrete information technology course has been introduced for all students in Key Stage 4. Drama is now offered as a GCSE subject and decisions have been taken to increase the degree of choice at Key Stage 4 from next September. Unsatisfactory provision for information technology at Key Stage 3 continues. There are plans for this to be taught within design and technology but planning has not included the application of these skills across other subjects.
49. Provision in Years 12 and 13 is good. The school provides a broad range of Advanced level GCE courses, in line with its policy to focus on this area of post-16 education. The quality of all courses is at least satisfactory and technology is enhanced by involvement in a Design Link Project. The general studies course provides a rich and varied range of learning. The Young Enterprise initiative promotes a wide range of skills within a business setting.
50. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced and effective in meeting the needs of pupils of high and average ability, but lacks adequate provision for the needs of lower attaining students. Though statutory requirements are met for information technology, pupils have only limited opportunities to develop and apply these skills within most subjects. Students taking art have limited opportunities to develop three-dimensional work and the timetabling of the foreign language short course handicaps continuity of learning.
51. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Information technology fails to meet statutory requirements. There is no planned, co-ordinated provision and it makes no contribution to learning in many subjects. There are particular strengths in technology where pupils work with a full range of materials and in physical education

pupils receive a particularly broad and balanced programme of activities. There is inconsistency in tutorial activities and the time is often used ineffectively. There is good equality of opportunity in all subjects and across all years.

52. There have been no significant changes to extra-curricular provision since the last inspection. The school continues to offer a satisfactory range of opportunities. Provision is of high quality and helps both to broaden pupils' experience and contribute to their personal and social development. There is a very good range of sporting activities provided through lunch-time, after-school clubs and inter-school competitions. Lunch-time clubs also provide opportunities for computer use and for drama, art and musical performance. There is a successful and much enjoyed annual Arts Week. During the inspection a large number of Year 11 students were observed learning to waltz in preparation for their end of year Prom. Visiting magistrates conducted a very useful information session for pupils on two occasions. A significant strength is the provision for additional study support during lunchtimes. This resulted last year in a significant number of students gaining a grade C at GCSE who might otherwise not have done so. Out of school cultural experiences are more limited. There are visits to art galleries and theatres and the students participate in music workshops and local concerts. There are good quality fieldwork arrangements that enrich the GCSE and Advanced level GCE courses in history and geography.
53. As this is a Catholic school, many relevant social and personal topics are covered in religious education lessons. The current arrangements for personal and social education at other times are unsatisfactory. Lessons occur every third week. This makes it difficult for the teacher to develop work from the previous lesson. The total time, just over one per cent of that available for all lessons, means that only a limited range of things can be covered each year. Within the time available, and with effective contributions by the science department, sex education is covered satisfactorily and education on the misuse of drugs is well covered at the appropriate time. A substantial part of the time allocated in Years 9, 11, and 13 in particular is used for academic and careers guidance. The overall coordination of the programme is broadly satisfactory but there is no formal monitoring, review or evaluation of the provision. Careers education is good. This provision is well planned and suitably flexible and effective in meeting the needs of all students. Resources to aid students' learning of the world of work are adequate and information on higher and further education is very good. They are well managed and very accessible. Careers interviews are provided on request for any student and their career aspirations are carefully reviewed. There are further interviews with careers guidance specialists as and when judged necessary. The school rightly prides itself on the impartiality of its advice and guidance arrangements. Students' destinations beyond the age of 16 are always carefully considered in their best interests. The Careers Guidance Service contributes well to the programme from Year 9 onwards. The previously unsatisfactory work experience arrangements in which students found their own placements have been completely revised. A comprehensive, well co-ordinated programme is now in place. However, the ways in which these experiences might enrich relevant areas of the subject curriculum have not been identified.
54. There continue to be satisfactory links with the community. Pastoral links with feeder primary schools are good, particularly for pupils with special educational needs, but curriculum links are weaker than at the time of the last inspection, particularly in the transfer of National Curriculum assessments beyond the core subjects. There are

good links with local schools, colleges and further education institutions which are effective in meeting the needs of pupils who wish to pursue vocation education and training or take Advanced level GCE courses not offered in school. There are also good links with local universities which aid initial teacher training opportunities and provide sixth form students with first hand experiences of higher education. Links with local industry are weaker. Work experience opportunities are provided through the Leicestershire Education Business Partnership and students taking GCSE food technology gain good quality first-hand experience of on-flight catering through links with East Midlands airport.

55. The contribution of subjects to students' spiritual development is broadly satisfactory. Work in history on the Second World War makes an important contribution as do aspects of twentieth century literature explored within English lessons. Teaching creates good opportunities for students to reflect beyond their own lives in art, music and English.
56. Provision to develop students' moral and social development is very good. Very good teacher/student relationships and high expectations underpin classroom practice throughout the school, contributing to the very high level of moral behaviour displayed by the great majority of students. A well-developed sense of right and wrong is displayed in discussions on moral issues in English, history, geography and sociology, where students show insight and sensitivity. For example Year 11 students contributed confidently to a discussion on individual, community and state responsibility for the support of the unemployed and those who cannot work. The study of moral issues in geography is strongly supported by some very good learning materials. Teaching emphasises fair play in competitive sports and students accept decisions with good grace. Many subjects use peer and self-marking and students' self-assessment in music demonstrates honesty and self-knowledge about their learning.
57. Across the curriculum students have a good range of opportunities to work collaboratively. They learn well from these experiences, showing an ability to resolve different views amicably and arrive at joint decisions. Students share equipment in lessons without fuss. Social conventions are learned through assemblies and other formal occasions and through such activities as a mock magistrates court. General studies make a valuable contribution to the personal development of students in Years 12 and 13.
58. There is little ethnic diversity in the school population and only limited activity to promote awareness of other cultures within the secular curriculum. The best contributions are made within art and food technology. Neither art nor music has appropriate resources to promote the learning of other cultures. Learning experiences of own culture and national heritage are stronger and feature well in English and history.
59. The school is strongly committed to the principle of equal opportunities. This is enshrined in its published aims and referred to throughout all of its published and internal documents. In all documentation there is an insistence that no individual shall be disadvantaged because of race, gender, physical or mental characteristics. The policy is in accord with the Christian principles and ethos of the school.
60. In line with the stated aims of the school, there are both men and women in positions of authority and no difference is made between boys and girls in the

subjects offered in the curriculum. However, in practice, some subjects in Years 12 and 13 are studied predominantly by either boys or girls.

61. All students may take GCSE examinations; any selection is purely on the grounds of the aptitude of the student for a particular subject. Although all courses in Years 12 and 13 lead to either Advanced or Advanced Supplementary qualifications, guidance arrangements within the school ensure that students study a range of other courses at other colleges. Within the current available accommodation it would be impossible to extend the provision within the school itself.
62. No examples were seen of any victimisation on the grounds of race, gender or ability. Boys and girls worked together in all of the lessons seen in a way that indicated that they were used to being treated as equals and that they were expected to treat each other with respect and courtesy. Nothing was seen that did not accord with the strong position taken by the school in its policy statements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

63. The school cares very well for its students, as it was judged to do at the time of the last inspection. Parents value highly the care with which students are inducted into the school at the age of 11 and the high quality of the support and guidance they receive at critical stages of their education thereafter.
64. The school provides a safe environment with good supervision at break times and before and after the school day. The headteacher is at present the nominated co-ordinator for health and safety. This is acknowledged to be an unsatisfactory arrangement because of his many other responsibilities but a recent initiative to find an alternative was unsuccessful. As a result there are no formally recorded safety inspections and the governing body is insufficiently involved in monitoring or participating in such arrangements. In the design and technology department the recommendations of an external safety adviser have still not been acted upon, nine months after the receipt of his report. Many students arrive and depart by bus. The school has comprehensive arrangements to supervise the safety of these arrangements.
65. Arrangements for child protection are good. One of the deputy headteachers is the child protection coordinator. She has been appropriately trained, is familiar with local procedures and has established good contacts with the appropriate agencies. All staff are made aware of her role. Child protection guidance is included in the induction arrangements for new and temporary members of staff. In-service training has been provided but needs to be renewed to ensure that all staff, including midday supervisors, know how to detect signs of abuse and are fully apprised of the action to take should a student start to divulge details of abuse. There are currently no students on the 'at risk' register but details of the procedures followed in the two most recent cases demonstrate the thoroughness and sensitivity of the school in exercising its duty of care in these matters.
66. Students' personal development is very well supported by the highly effective pastoral management. Many students are well supported and guided by their tutors who normally remain with them throughout their school careers up to the age of 16. The heads of school meet on a monthly basis with the headteacher to discuss issues of care, guidance and pastoral support. In addition there is a short daily meeting before school at which teachers are made aware of any immediate

problems that involve individual students. It is a particularly strong feature of the school's provision that personal development is given equal weight along side high academic achievement

67. Procedures to promote attendance are good. These have been improved since the last inspection by the introduction of electronic recording systems. The school acts promptly by telephone or letter to contact parents if absence is not notified. Persistent, erratic attenders are duly referred to the education welfare officer who visits the school on a weekly basis. Deputy heads of year have a specific responsibility to promote good attendance and frequently fulfil this role with ingenuity, for example by involving poor attenders in lunch-time clubs. Attendance data is well monitored and the distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence is well understood. Students are not expected to take holidays during term time and the school plans shortly to regard all such occasions as unauthorised absences. The procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are good. Misbehaviour is addressed promptly but fairly, involving, when necessary, detention or a written warning that leads to a firm review of behaviour by the form tutor. If the unacceptable behaviour continues then parents are informed in writing. Every effort is made to avoid exclusions, including home visits by heads of school and, on occasions, the involvement of members of the governing body.
68. The inclusive and supportive school ethos encourages good behaviour as the norm. Students are treated as individuals and valued as people. They in turn value this fundamental feature of their school. Additional, lunchtime and after school study support is a strong feature of the school's provision. A group of teachers who have been trained as counsellors also voluntarily run a drop-in centre to give students advice during the lunch hour and the school nurse runs a parallel service on two days each week.
69. Bullying is tackled sensitively but firmly on an individual basis and also through assemblies and aspects of the programme of personal and social education. There is no evidence of racism. Boys and girls nearly always treat each other with respect and as equals, an attitude well illustrated when a large number of Year 11 students attended a lunchtime dancing lesson in preparation for their end of year Prom.
70. The monitoring of students' personal and academic standards is good. However, records of personal development are limited to assessing effort and there is no written profiling of the development of other personal qualities such as perseverance or initiative. There are also missed opportunities to promote personal and social development in the morning registration session when time is rarely well used and activities are unstructured. As much as 10 per cent of the time spent in school can be lost as a result. The formal personal and social education programme occurs for one lesson only every third week of the annual cycle. This limits the quality and continuity of such provision although, as this is a Catholic school, such matters are also addressed within the provision for religious education.
71. Assessment procedures and the arrangements to monitor students' standards and progress are good overall. They are particularly effective in Years 12 and 13, increasingly effective at Key Stage 4 but insufficiently developed at Key Stage 3. The administration of the school's assessment policy is monitored by senior members of staff assigned to particular departments. There is some variation between departments in Key Stage 3 and the school is seeking to achieve a greater degree of consistency. Assessment is not always used uniformly across all subjects

to identify weaknesses and modify the curriculum accordingly. In information technology there is no assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 and the degree of rigour and accuracy in statutory assessment procedures is inconsistent. It is better in English, mathematics, science, history, geography and physical education. It is less comprehensive in design and technology, music and art and the 1998 assessments in information technology at the end of Key Stage 3 were invalid. Standards in this subject were not assessed in 1999.

72. The quality of day-to-day marking is good. In many lessons, teachers maintain a constant awareness of progress as they conduct the lesson or circulate to support group work. In this way, they make suggestions, correct misunderstandings and are able to assess the level at which pupils are working. Sometimes these interventions need to be more carefully planned so that the teacher targets particular needs and spends quality time with particular individuals. Students' work is marked regularly and usually accompanied with positive comments. In English, for example, there is thorough marking and assessment of work throughout the school, and teachers keep comprehensive records. Students know the assessment criteria and what they need to do to improve. The physical education department monitors pupils' progress continuously throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. All pupils are assessed at the end of each block of work. Indicators about grading are posted within the department and pupils are able to set their own targets.
73. The use of primary transfer data and Key Stage 2 national test results has yet to be fully developed. There is limited use of Key Stage 2 national test results to set student and subject targets for Key Stage 3. The school has recently extended its assessment arrangements to include annual cognitive ability testing for each year group within Key Stage 3. This is intended to supplement the test results which are usually, but not always, received when students enter the school at the age of 11 and provide a firmer benchmark against which to measure progress and set targets for all students by the age of 14. In history, for example, Key Stage 2 national test results in English, mathematics and science are used in conjunction with nationally available figures to provide end of key stage targets for all students. Such practice is not a consistent feature across all subjects within the basic curriculum.
74. Computerised support and monitoring systems are in place in Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13. Arrangements are weaker at Key Stage 3 where there is no central database through which individual progress can be monitored and information retrieved immediately. Between the age of 11 and 14 students are members of the lower and the middle school. The monitoring of their progress requires particularly careful planning if continuity of expectation is to be assured and consistent targets set.
75. There are paper systems in place which allow for the collection of information across subjects. Several departments have, at the heart of their assessment procedures, some good practice and materials, but these do not yield a National Curriculum level for the subject. An example of this occurs in mathematics: there is regular quality assessment over the whole of Key Stage 3, but the assessment units yield only a percentage, with no reference to any National Curriculum levels. There are similar situations in other departments, including modern foreign languages, design and technology, and history.
76. The Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) of students with special educational needs frequently, but not always, include appropriate targets for subjects. Formal

assessment procedures are carried out by the special needs co-ordinator and there are regular reviews of students' attainment and progress, and annual reviews of pupils with statements of special educational need, as is required.

77. The arrangements to monitor progress and set targets are particularly strong in Years 12 and 13 and an increasingly strong feature of the school's provision in Key Stage 4. Parents welcome and appreciate the care that the school takes to keep them informed about progress. Regular assessment in all subjects now occurs consistently and regularly in each year after the age of 14. Work over a period of time is given a GCSE or Advanced level GCE grade. This information is gathered centrally and stored electronically. Termly progress sheets are sent to parents. During Key Stage 4 all students have an individual interview with a senior member of staff in order to review progress. Progress from GCSE to GCE Advanced level performance is analysed by value added methods and used very effectively to measure and monitor students' progress. These highly effective arrangements are making a significant contribution to the rising trend in standards at the age of 16 and 18 in many subjects. The school now needs to develop equally thorough arrangements at Key Stage 3 in order to raise standards still higher.
78. In response to the last inspection the school has worked hard to improve the quality of its assessment practice. It has developed its procedures for analysing pupils' progress and has produced a more consistent approach to assessment practice across departments in Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13. The school plans to use the knowledge gained here to improve assessment in Key Stage 3. As the school increases the role of information technology in the storage and retrieval of assessment data it should consider the advantages such systems bring to the systematic tracking of individual pupils or groups of pupils - especially against national benchmark data. Questions and hypotheses regarding the progress of the gifted students or ethnic minorities in subjects and between subjects could, for example, be investigated easily and objectively.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

79. The school works very well with its parents. They, in turn, are nearly always enthusiastic and appreciative of the school's commitment to serve the best interests of its students. The very positive views expressed by so many parents are a powerful testament to the strength of the partnership that the school has established. This was well evidenced in the many written responses that accompanied the parental questionnaire as part of the pre-inspection arrangements. Nearly all parents who responded to the questionnaire valued very highly the high expectations set by the school, the good teaching, the promotion of high standards of behaviour and the ways by which the school encouraged maturity and responsibility in its students. Nearly all parents feel that their children make good progress and believe that the school is well managed and led.
80. The school provides a good level of information to its parents. The monthly newsletter is much appreciated. This includes, in very readable form, news of recent successes, interesting information about developments in school and much of general interest about the school community. The prospectus and annual report to parents are equally clear and well written.
81. Students' annual reports are less informative. Few contain targets or identify clearly the strengths and weaknesses in students' studies. No information is included that

might help parents to work with their children in order to raise standards further. At Key Stage 3 there is little information relating standards to National Curriculum levels; results of tests are quoted but how these relate to the expected standards within the National Curriculum is not made clear. There are, however, well-organised and well-attended parents' meetings linked to the issue of reports.

82. Parents are kept well informed about choices at GCSE and Advanced level GCE. There are well established channels of communication, including parent governors, the parent teachers association and the school newsletter. These are not used currently to consult parents and carers about curricular provision or major spending decisions.
83. The level of direct parental involvement in the life of the school is very good. There is an active parent-teacher association that discusses school affairs and raises money. The headteacher attends every meeting of the association, reflecting the importance that the school places upon its activities. Attendance at school events is high. This was well illustrated in the very busy parents' evening that took place during the week of the inspection. A number of parents have helped keep certain parts of the school in good decorative order, a particularly valuable service at a time when the premises maintenance budget was sorely stretched. Some parents also referee sports fixtures and many attend matches to support the school.
84. The highly effective partnership with parents is further enhanced by their involvement in their children's career plans and also by the school's provision of charts that plot their child's progress towards GCSE. The monitoring and signing of homework diaries further involves parents in supporting their children's progress.
85. Although home school contracts are in place, the strength of the partnership with parents lies in its naturalness rather than its formal expression. Many parents speak highly of the headteacher's approachability, appreciate the informality of their discussions and the way in which any complaint is usually handled.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

86. The school is well led. Its overall management is satisfactory. Many of the key issues identified in the last inspection concerned aspects of the school's management. During the last four years, and particularly since the appointment of the new headteacher approximately eighteen months ago, some progress has been made in addressing these, although financial constraints have resulted in a reduction in the number of deputy headteachers, an increase in their teaching commitments and a resultant reduction in the amount of time available for them to manage.

87. The headteacher has provided effective leadership and has managed the school carefully, with an eye on the more immediate issues, in order to maintain stability and sustain curriculum and staffing provision at a time of financial difficulties and necessary change. As a result the staff have maintained a unity and very strong commitment to the values and aims of the school. He has led carefully the introduction of arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and has also shown good leadership qualities in addressing the need to develop the management skills of his subject leaders, and the particular current weaknesses within the management of music. He needs now to work with the governing body to establish a long term strategic plan for the school. Several changes of leadership within the governing body have created difficulties in achieving a consistent long term strategy but its new leadership is strong and, combined with the appointment of several new governors during this school year, now has a firm commitment to adopt a more strategic view and, when necessary, exercise not only a supportive but helpfully critical role. The partnership between the headteacher and his governors has the potential to make the school even better in the longer term.
88. Effective teamwork is a strong feature of the current senior management team. The headteacher delegates very effectively within the team and the roles of the deputy headteachers encompass responsibility for the personal development and academic progress of the students as well as the development of the teaching and support staff. Both deputies provide a good degree of leadership and are skilled in motivating their colleagues. Professional relationships within and beyond the team are good and the involvement of two senior teachers has helped to broaden its expertise. The school needs now to develop further the management responsibilities of its heads of subject so that the drive to raise further its standards and quality is co-ordinated right across the school.
89. Both of the deputy headteachers, and the senior teachers, teach for a substantial portion of the week. As a result, despite a very high level of commitment, there is insufficient time for them to fulfil all aspects of their management roles and particularly the monitoring of standards and quality. There are limited opportunities for reflection and strategic thinking in the current arrangements and consequently the longer term direction of the school is not clearly defined. The teaching commitments of subject leaders also provide insufficient time for them to fulfil their management functions, particularly the monitoring of pupils' work and teaching. As the school's financial position improves, consideration needs to be given to costing the staff time necessary to fulfil these important management functions.
90. The majority of the senior team are starting to make effective use of new technology, in particular those involved in leading the school's work on target setting. Some subject leaders, for example in design and technology, have comprehensive systems to record assessment data. There needs to be more emphasis on analysing the data in order to inform planning.
91. As part of the school's response to the management weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection, there is now clearer line management between the senior management team and heads of subject but the links between the heads of school and heads of subject are still insufficiently clear. As a result there is some lack of co-ordination between their work. This is particularly important as the heads of school have responsibility for the overall progress of the students in their care and heads of subject are now required to take an increasingly active role in target setting and monitoring of progress. The headteacher has actively involved heads of subject

in reviewing their role as managers as well as teachers, involving an external consultant to support this work.

92. There are currently a minimal number of whole school policies in place. These include all those that are statutorily required. A feature of the school's current management development is the strategy to increase delegation to subject leaders in order to increase the management role. At present there are insufficient policies in place to enable them to exercise initiative within a broadly agreed framework with the added risk that action will become increasingly un-coordinated and potentially inefficient.
93. There are signs of significant progress in some areas of departmental leadership. This is particularly strong in modern foreign languages and physical education where management change has resulted in significant improvements in standards of achievement and quality of teaching. Leadership is good in English, geography and history. Within the humanities department the diligent response to the findings of the last inspection has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of the curriculum. This had led in turn to improved standards.
94. There are weaknesses in the management of art because the subject leadership role lacks clarity and the links with design and technology are also unclear. There is no link between the departmental plan and the school development plan, teaching outcomes are not monitored consistently and insufficient attention is given to higher attaining pupils. These factors contribute to unsatisfactory standards in art up to the age of 16. These are in marked contrast to the very good work produced in Years 12 and 13. Management within music is poor. There is no development plan and no scheme of work. These are serious weaknesses in a subject where the teaching on occasion involves non-specialists. The headteacher has taken necessary, supportive steps to improve the situation. The lack of a co-ordinator for information and communication technology and also for language development across the curriculum are significant omissions in the management of students' learning. The school does not meet fully statutory requirements for information technology at Key Stage 3 and the planned mapping of information and communication technology in each subject scheme of work has lacked leadership and co-ordination. As a result it has not happened. Whilst nearly all pupils have a good standard of literacy, and this is well developed in some subjects, a whole school approach would help to raise standards even higher.
95. The day-to-day management of the provision for special education needs is very good although the coordinator is not currently involved in planning the budget. Liaison with subject departments is now much better than at the time of the last inspection. There are link teachers within each subject area. Except in art, this provides generally effective communication. Individual education plans are regularly monitored and reviewed and subject specific targets are in place within geography, physical education, modern foreign languages, art and science.
96. The headteacher and his senior colleagues have provided sound leadership in developing a commitment to raising standards further. Students have traditionally done well; the headteacher's declared intention is that they should do even better. The very effective mentoring programme of Year 11 students, in which every student is interviewed by the headteacher or one of his deputies, contributed to a 7 per cent increase in grades A*-C at GCSE last year. A team of staff complement this work with support and guidance at lunchtime, as a result of which a significant number of

students raised their grades from a D to a C at GCSE. Many subject areas also provide additional support in preparation for GCSE examinations and this shared commitment to examination success is a striking feature of the school. The guidance and support linked to target setting in Years 12 and 13 are very well managed by the head of senior school. The use of computerised systems to monitor progress and identify targets is a developing feature at Key Stage 4. Target setting is less well established at Key Stage 3 and the monitoring of progress in different subjects lacks sufficient co-ordination across subject areas. Insufficient work is currently undertaken to identify and act upon relative subject performance indicators. Given the difficulties of limited available time, the school's priority has been to develop target setting beyond the age of 14. The use of standardised test scores and National Curriculum test results have contributed to establishing an initial benchmark for pupils at the age of 11 but this is insufficiently understood and applied as a basis for challenging target setting.

97. For the majority of the time since the last inspection the governing body has fulfilled a supportive but largely uncritical role in the life of the school. It has not been as effective as it should have been. It has been particularly diligent in making a very effective contribution through the work of its exclusions and admissions panels. The latter is often a difficult role in a very popular school and the governors have been scrupulously fair in their decision making.
98. The governors have also contributed to the very low level of exclusions through timely interventions and warnings. The governing body has also, through its finance committee, undertaken important work in monitoring and steering the school's progress from a deficit to a balanced budget over the last two years. Through the headteacher's regular reports it is able to monitor what is happening in school but it does not contribute sufficiently to the evaluation of the effectiveness of major planning and spending decisions.
99. Until very recently the governing body has been insufficiently involved in promoting school improvement. In particular, its curriculum committee has met infrequently. As a result, its awareness of statutory requirements and forthcoming curriculum changes is limited. The then governing body was insufficiently involved in the creation and monitoring of the action plan following the last inspection of the school and it has not been actively involved in the creation, monitoring and evaluation of the current school development plan.
100. There have been significant, recent improvements in the school's arrangements to monitor and evaluate its performance. Overall, current arrangements are incomplete and, therefore, unsatisfactory. Strengths and weaknesses in both provision and standards are known to senior managers but are less frequently written down. The headteacher has led the developments in monitoring teaching quality but there is no whole-school policy for teaching and learning against which this quality might be agreed and assured. Subject leaders need to become subject managers; some are still reluctant to contribute to the evaluation of their colleagues' performance. Others have insufficient time to fulfil this role as they would wish. There are currently no formal appraisal arrangements in place. Some job descriptions are unsatisfactory, out of date or unknown to the post holder. The school is not well placed to meet the challenges and requirements of performance management.
101. The current school development plan for the period up to 2003 does not help the school sufficiently to identify areas for improvement. It does not promote or support

strategic thinking and action. Many of its objectives do not extend beyond the current school year. The plan does include targets but overall the plan does not identify clearly how the various actions will improve teaching and learning. There are no criteria against which success might be measured and this makes it difficult for the school and its governors to evaluate its effectiveness. There are some costs included but the links to the school's financial plan are not clear. The current school development plan lacks the necessary rigour to help the school's management and its governors determine the cost-effectiveness of its decisions. As a result of these weaknesses it does not help the school and its governors to monitor and evaluate its performance. The headteacher has rightly identified the need to develop the management role of subject leaders and has taken effective action to initiate improvements in this area. However, strategies to address the needs of talented pupils and lower attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 have not been fully costed and planned. The annual report to parents, prepared by the governors, does provide a useful review although it does not include all the statutory reporting requirements for special educational needs provision.

102. The school makes sound strategic use of its resources. Financial controls are good. Its total income and also its basic budget per pupil are low in comparison with funding levels nationally. Despite the need to devise an austerity budget over the last two years in order to clear a deficit it has maintained a satisfactory pupil teacher ratio, albeit it at some cost to management time. Staffing costs amount to approximately 75 per cent of the school's expenditure. These have reduced by 2 per cent in the current financial year but remain in the upper quartile range when comparisons are made with national patterns of expenditure. This in part reflects the high level of long experience across the staff.
103. The finance committee has worked very hard to achieve stable staffing and the school is on target to move into surplus by the end of the current financial year. An analysis undertaken as part of the inspection indicates that funding is apportioned to each key stage in accordance with the appropriate budget share. Standards fund income is monitored carefully and reconciled annually. Many of the training courses attended are linked to departmental and school priorities, including whole school training on teaching and learning styles. However, this expenditure is insufficiently evaluated and the principles of best value are applied only at a general level. There is a satisfactory degree of consultation but insufficient comparisons are made with the range of training options available. Investment in staff development needs to be linked more rigorously to further improvements in teaching and learning.
104. The financial plan does not currently include a precise breakdown of how special educational needs income is apportioned. This makes it very difficult to evaluate its cost-effectiveness. Within its major expenditure areas the bursar seeks to confirm best value but these principles have not yet been rigorously established within the financial planning at senior management and governor levels.
105. The staffing costs of the curriculum provision need to be more accurately costed and a closer link established between the school development plan and its financial plan. Capitation is allocated through an agreed, appropriately weighted formula to heads of subject. These equitable arrangements generally work well although on occasions departments underspend their allocation and there is no automatic carry over. Current arrangements do not provide for subject departments to plan long term expenditure to support strategic development of the curriculum.

106. There are sufficient teaching staff to meet the needs of the basic curriculum. There are satisfactory arrangements to manage the induction of newly qualified teachers and well-managed involvement in the initial teacher training of a large number of students. The proportion of part-time staff, approximately 20 per cent, is high and similar to the level at the time of the last inspection. This has had no adverse effect on standards although it does place significant pressures in staffing the personal and social education lessons and form tutor roles, particularly if staff are absent. Several long-term absences also place additional strain on some subject areas. There is currently no coordinator for information and communication technology across the school. Overall, staff are effectively deployed.
107. Deficiencies in accommodation continue to cause difficulties. Facilities for art have not improved significantly since the last inspection. The open-plan facilities offer good opportunities for the flexible grouping of activities and immediate access to material resources but, in practice, the space is used regularly as a thoroughfare. The departments of English, humanities and mathematics have an insufficient number of specialist rooms. As a result, resources are not always immediately available, impairing the quality of provision. Approximately 25 per cent of lessons in geography and history occur outside the departmental area and one teacher teaches in 9 different locations. Some specialist areas, particularly in English, are unattractive and poorly decorated, doing little to stimulate creativity and imagination. There is a current shortage of science laboratory space. However, these facilities are not always well used and, on occasions during the inspection, expensive laboratory facilities were used for theory rather than for practical lessons. Similarly, although the information technology facilities are limited there were many occasions during the week of the inspection when they remained unused. Whilst the library is used on occasions for timetabled lessons, there were occasions when its use was not planned during the week. Very good use is made of the swimming pool to establish high standards within physical education although overall facilities are barely sufficient for a school of this size.
108. Expenditure on learning resources has increased this year but some shortages remain. Nearly all subjects have sufficient books and recent improvements have ensured that all pupils have the appropriate mathematics text book. Book resources, however, remain limited in English and there is also limited technical equipment within the drama studio. The humanities and modern languages departments make very good use of their audio visual equipment to engage the interest of their students and raise standards by developing skills and understanding. Despite significant investment in additional computers the ratio of such equipment to the number of pupils in the school remains low. Shortage of suitable space, as much as shortage of funds, contributes to the difficulties in achieving improvements in the level of provision. There have been improvements in the library and redundant stock has been removed. However, provision, despite being very well organised and attractively displayed, remains very low for a school of this size. It is also under-used by subject departments, other than by the oldest pupils in science. There is no whole-school plan, nor references within departmental schemes of work, identifying how this important and expensive resource might be used effectively to further raise standards by increasing students' skills in research and learning for themselves.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

109. The Delisle Catholic School is a very effective school that already provides very well

for its students and performs very well in national tests and public examinations. In order to become even better it should:

- **Improve the strategic management of the school by:**
 - developing the partnership with governors to secure their full involvement in the further improvement of the school;
 - improving current practice in development planning so that it is linked more closely to the school's long-term financial plan;
 - identifying more clearly the intermediate steps that it needs to take in order to reach its longer-term targets;
 - using success criteria, linked to clearly stated intended improvements in teaching and learning, to inform more effective evaluation of management decisions and actions;
 - providing more time for senior and middle managers to fulfil their management functions;
 - increasing further the management understanding of subject leaders;
 - developing whole school policies for teaching and learning to assure consistency as it seeks to increase delegated responsibility to subject leaders.

Paragraphs: 42,87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 94.

- **Improve provision at Key Stage 3 by:**
 - ensuring that the statutory requirements for information and communication technology are fully met and the key skills gained are applied across all subjects;
 - renewing and extending the links with primary schools to provide a broader and more complete range of assessment data to establish clearer benchmarks and create firmer targets in all subjects;
 - making planned provision in schemes of work to promote spiritual and cultural awareness and understanding in all subjects;
 - defining clearer assessment criteria and learning targets that are linked to the standards described in the subject orders of the national curriculum;
 - devising and implementing an effective strategy to provide suitably challenging learning for talented students.
 - developing policies for language and numeracy across the curriculum.

Paragraphs: 28, 31, 51, 54, 58, 71, 73, 75, 77, 94, 96.

- **Improve the school's readiness for performance management by:**

- establishing an up-to-date set of job descriptions for all staff;
- formalising current arrangements to monitor teaching and learning quality;
- revitalising its systems for appraisal.

Paragraphs: 89, 100

The inspection team considers that the school should also seek ways to:

- raise standards further in art for students between the ages of 11 and 16;
- improve the management of music;
- make better use of some of its existing facilities by managing their use more efficiently, ensuring that expensive laboratories are always used for their intended purpose, that the library is more fully used as a facility for research and that computer rooms are not left unused;
- enrich further the curriculum at Key Stage 4 by broadening and strengthening the links between the infrequent personal and social education lessons and religious education; integrating careers education and guidance more fully into the subject curriculum; co-ordinating the development of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology; planning more rigorously the spiritual and cultural development of all students; monitoring and evaluating current provision for lower attaining students;
- monitor and evaluate the current use of the morning registration time.

Paragraphs: 9, 11,13, 18, 32, 53, 55, 94, 107

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

110.

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

174

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

40

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	18	45	30	2	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	1063	160
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	67	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	149	2

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	102	103	205

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	90	72
	Girls	97	87	75
	Total	175	177	147
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (81)	86 (79)	72 (81)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48(34)	59 (53)	38(38)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	69	82	97
	Girls	87	75	100
	Total	156	157	197
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (74)	77 (78)	96 (90)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60(59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (39)	51 (62)	64 (74)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	93	109	202

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	57	84	91
	Girls	77	109	109
	Total	134	193	200
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (61)	96 (95)	99 (98)
	National	47.8 (46.3)	88.4 (87.5)	93.9 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	48.5 (43.5)
	National	37.8 (37.0)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	49	25	74

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	20.6	18.4	19.9 (23.1)	3.5	N/a	3.5 (3.3)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (19.0)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (3.3)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	1
Indian	5
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	4
White	1203
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	8	
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)	64.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.9:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	87

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.79
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	23
Sixth Form	19

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	2362643
Total expenditure	2362913
Expenditure per pupil	1987.3
Balance brought forward from previous year	-48804
Balance carried forward to next year	-49074

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1223
Number of questionnaires returned	396

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	40	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	38	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	52	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	48	16	2	2
The teaching is good.	48	48	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	47	10	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	36	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	36	49	11	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	50	42	2	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	48	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	41	8	2	8

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The parents who returned questionnaires, as well as those who attended the pre-inspection meeting, have a very high regard for the school. They feel very strongly that their children like coming to school. The things they value most about the school are the high expectations and standards it sets both in academic work and in behaviour. They also value highly how it encourages maturity and self-discipline. Many consider the teaching at the school to be good and feel they are kept well informed about their children's progress. They feel that the school is well led and managed.

Other issues raised by parents

There was some disagreement on the issue of homework: some parents felt that the practice of setting homework was inconsistent. There was no evidence found during the inspection to support this view. A small number of parents also felt that reports might be more specific in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses in their studies. The inspection found that the current reports could give more information about national curriculum standards.

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

ENGLISH

111. Standards of attainment in English are high. In 1999, the results of the national tests taken by 14-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above the national average for pupils reaching level 5 and above. Eighty-five per cent of students gained this level, compared with 64 per cent nationally. They are also well above the national average at the higher levels, level 6 and above. Thirty-four per cent of students reached level 6 in the tests, compared with 21 per cent nationally. Fourteen per cent reached level 7 or higher, compared with 7 per cent nationally. These results are well above the average for similar schools. Within the school, students do better in the English tests than in science, though more reach the higher levels in mathematics. Girls perform better than boys in English at all levels, but the difference is about the same as that seen nationally. The results show an improvement on the 1998 figures. Over the last three years, attainment at this age has been consistently well above national average levels.
112. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of higher grade passes in GCSE English is well above the national average. Seventy per cent gained A*-C grades, compared with 55 per cent nationally. All students gained A*-G grades, whilst the national figure was 99 per cent. The results for English literature are also above the national average. Sixty-nine per cent gained A*-C grade passes, 9 per cent above the national average. Ninety-nine per cent gained A*-G grades, compared with 98 per cent nationally. All students are entered for the English literature examination. This is not the case in most schools. In both subjects, fewer pupils gained the highest grades of A*-A, however, compared with the national pattern. The results in English are broadly in line with the average performance across all subjects in the school. Girls and boys did equally well in 1999. In previous years, girls achieved better results than boys. Overall, standards have improved consistently over the last three years.
113. In Years 12 and 13 standards are above average. Options are offered for the English literature and the English language and literature examinations at Advanced level. In 1999, all candidates obtained grades A-E in both examinations. The national pass rate was 95 per cent in English Literature and 92 per cent in English Language and Literature. Approximately one third of the candidates obtained either A or B grades, which was broadly in line with the national average across both examinations. Only two students have failed to gain a pass grade on either course over the past three years. Numbers taking the subject have remained constant over that period. Significantly, very few students withdraw before the end of the course.
114. Standards in English on entry to the school are this year well above the national average. This is shown by the average points score in the Key Stage 2 tests in English, for pupils who entered the school in 1999. Achievement, in the light of this prior attainment, is satisfactory at Key Stage 3; it is good at Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13. Students maintain sound progress and perform at well above average standards at the end of Key Stage 3. Value-added analyses of GCSE

results in 1999 show that progress was well above average compared with pupils who began their GCSE course in other schools which had similar standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. The demands of public examinations help to maintain pupils' motivation and commitment at Key Stage 4. Most build effectively upon their previous learning and make good progress overall in developing formal skills in reading and writing. Progress is also good beyond the age of sixteen. Students build on their work at GCSE successfully to achieve, in most cases, suitably realistic but challenging target grades. The school provides high levels of individual support and guidance for students at this stage.

115. Students with special educational needs also make good progress in all years, and achieve satisfactorily. They are well supported by special needs staff during lessons and clearly benefit from the help provided. At Key Stage 4, some students with special educational needs benefit from additional literacy support in Certificate of Achievement work.
116. In lessons seen during the inspection, standards in speaking were good throughout the school and those in listening were satisfactory. The great majority of students make constructive contributions to whole class, paired and small group discussions. They are encouraged to develop their own opinions and to support them logically, with reference to objective evidence in discussions on literature. In most classes, teachers also place a sound emphasis on the importance of listening carefully to other people. The listening skills of a significant minority of students are unsatisfactory in mixed ability classes at the end of Key Stage 3 and in some lower ability classes at Key Stage 4. In some lessons, where expectations are not set out clearly or observed consistently, small groups of students do not listen well to teachers or to each other. Less is achieved in these lessons as a result. At Key Stage 3, most students speak confidently in class and show insight in discussions of literature studied. In one Year 7 class, they were able to convey character and express emotions to good effect in improvised role-play based on project work in English lessons. At Key Stage 4, students across the ability range speak with fluency and maturity, demonstrating the ability to evaluate and respond to literature and each other's ideas. For those who choose to take the subject at GCSE, drama sessions develop clear and expressive speech. At GCE Advanced level, students are well-motivated and show good levels of interest in language-based discussions and analysis of literary texts. They generally put forward their ideas articulately, supported by detailed argument.
117. Standards of reading are good at each of the key stages. Throughout the school, students are given the opportunity to study a range of high quality literature by major authors, poets and dramatists. These include works by Shakespeare, Dickens, and the Brontes, amongst others, at appropriate ages. George Orwell and William Golding are among more recent writers. Close attention to the meaning of the text is well-developed from an early stage through the study of shared class readers. Personal enjoyment of books is fostered from Year 7 onwards. At Key Stage 3, the use of reading logs and time for silent reading help pupils to establish sound habits of wider personal reading. Most students are good, independent readers. By the end of the key stage, the majority are able to read aloud accurately and with some expression. They are also beginning to come to grips effectively with sustained written commentaries on texts studied in class. At Key Stage 4, analytical reading skills are developed significantly through the study of novels, plays and poetry in preparation for the GCSE. Higher ability students in particular are able to explore, in some depth, character and theme in prose and drama scripts studied. In one

lesson, with a lower ability set in Year 10, students responded with considerable sensitivity to a poem on the subject of abortion, commenting effectively on the impact of language used. Analytical, close-reading skills are further developed in studying an appropriate range of demanding literature for GCE advanced level work.

118. Standards in writing are also good throughout the school and across the ability range. At Key Stage 3, students are provided with opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences: narrative and descriptive essays; poems; personal and factual writing; letters and diaries. There is a sound emphasis on technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as the importance of re-drafting work and reviewing its quality. There is also evidence of good progress in structuring critical responses to literature before the end of the key stage. At the end of Key Stage 4, progress for all students is consolidated, and improved for higher attainers. For most, essays are well-structured, with a clear focus, using a range of vocabulary appropriately. In the sixth form, students write intelligently and in considerable detail about language topics and literature studied. Overall, standards achieved in written work are a strength in the subject. Throughout the school, pupils take pride in their work. The great majority of students write clearly and present their work carefully. The department has very limited access to IT equipment, however. Students are encouraged to develop word-processing and desk top publishing skills if they have appropriate facilities at home, but the English department has no dedicated computer equipment and is able to schedule very little lesson time in the school's computer rooms. Opportunities to use new technologies creatively and to further improve accuracy in written work are lost.
119. There were no significant departmental issues for action noted in the last inspection report. Good progress has been made in raising standards further at each key stage. The department has also refined and developed its procedures in assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress. There is good practice in self-assessment and target setting that the Department proposed to introduce at the time of the last inspection. The previous report noted the lack of an agreed policy for the systematic teaching of spelling. This still has not been introduced, though spelling mistakes are corrected in written work and students are given some responsibility for learning correct spellings.
120. The standard of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3; good at Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13. These judgements take into account not only lessons observed but also planning and preparation for teaching the standards reached and the quality of learning that results. Teaching was less than satisfactory, exceptionally, in only one lesson observed. It was good or very good in over 80 per cent of lessons. Very good teaching was seen in poetry appreciation and detailed literary criticism at Key Stage 4. Such lessons were brisk, well-planned and clearly focused on specific learning objectives. The support provided and evident enthusiasm of teachers in these classes encouraged the students to learn effectively. In other successful lessons, strengths were seen in teachers' good subject knowledge; high expectations for achievement, in particular in written work, and very good use of assessment to monitor students' progress. The results of assessment are shared openly with them. There is particularly good practice in this respect in detailed evaluation of coursework at GCSE and GCE Advanced level. Students have a clear idea of their achievements and also contribute their own targets for improving work further. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their students and, in most classes, supportive and constructive relationships are a strong feature. These

approaches clearly improve student motivation and interest. Homework is set regularly and is generally well-planned to reinforce and develop work begun in class. Written work is marked by all teachers very conscientiously, to a common grading system that is carefully explained. Full written comments are given at the end of a piece of work.

121. Teaching is less effective where learning objectives and the overall scope of the work are not communicated clearly at the outset. Students are left unsure about the precise nature of the task they are asked to do. These lessons lack structure and do not end with any attempt to reinforce or develop learning in a final plenary session. Student management is also not always effective when behaviour is challenging or students are not fully engaged by the subject matter of the lesson. In such situations, the pace and use of time suffer since the students set the expectations themselves. Similarly, task or teaching methods do not meet the range of needs in some lower ability sets at Key Stage 4 and in mixed ability classes at the end of Key Stage 3, when the nature of the work becomes more demanding in preparation for the National Curriculum tests. High and low ability groups do not always find an appropriate level of challenge in the work they are asked to do. Finally, teachers' use of a range of resources was limited in lessons observed - in particular the use of IT and audio-visual equipment to enrich and develop learning opportunities.
122. The management of the English department is good. The head of department shows considerable commitment to high academic standards and wishes to improve the quality of teaching and learning still further. There are clear policies in place for the central aspects of work, which are monitored on an ongoing basis. The staff are appropriately qualified and all are experienced in teaching the subject. Several of them hold senior pastoral or administrative positions in the school. All of the staff are conscientious and hard working. They co-operate effectively as a team to share and develop good practice. There is also a commitment to staff development. Most staff have attended some in-service training during the past year - particularly in drama teaching, literacy work or assessment practice. Special needs support is also well-deployed at Key Stage 3, when pupils are withdrawn from classes for additional help. Whilst such practices are good, the department is not involved centrally in the process for whole-school development planning. Whole-school objectives are taken into account in the departmental development plan, however. Resources for the subject are unsatisfactory in several respects. The range of class readers available at Key Stage 3 is limited, as is audio-visual equipment. Access to IT equipment is very restricted. Teaching rooms are poorly maintained and presented. They do not encourage pride in the environment. The space available for teaching drama at Key Stage 3 is less than ideal. Staff cope well when faced with such limitations, but they do not help in the drive for higher standards.
123. National Curriculum requirements are met at Key Stages 3 and 4. There is a thorough scheme of work, based on a commercial textbook at Key Stage 3, which ensures continuity in planning and progression for all students. Standards of teacher assessment are good throughout and consistent with National Curriculum test and public examination results. There are regular internal meetings for moderation of standards at Key Stage 3 and for coursework at GCSE. A Departmental portfolio of exemplar materials is maintained. The curriculum in English also contributes effectively to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is successfully achieved through the study of literary texts and promotion of class discussion on such issues: for example, during the period of the

inspection, pupils in Year 10 considered aspects of Victorian society as presented in works by Dickens; issues of good and evil in human nature are raised by the GCSE text 'Macbeth'; and GCE Advanced level students consider the range of attitudes towards Christianity depicted in 'Jane Eyre'. At GCSE, a study of works from other cultures is a requirement of the course. The range of extra-curricular activities is limited, however. Further development of this area, to involve and enthuse pupils in English activities, should be considered. A number of theatre visits are arranged, particularly for older students, to enrich their experience of plays studied. An Arts Week is organised annually, which provides an opportunity for them to present drama work and to meet visiting authors. There is an annual school play, produced with the help of the design and technology department. In the autumn term, a lunchtime drama club was run for Year 8 students by a student teacher at the school.

124. Students' attitudes to learning in English lessons are good. The great majority are interested in tasks set and behave well in lessons. In some lessons, however, a minority show less motivation and application, allowing themselves to become distracted in small group and individual work in particular. Relationships between students and with adults are nevertheless friendly and supportive. Collaborative work in class and drama activities are usually constructive, with purposeful discussion and effective development of ideas. Most pupils organise their time and effort appropriately. At Key Stage 4 and in Year 12 and 13, they cope well with tasks which require individual study and research. When given opportunities for reflection, their assessment of their own progress is sound, based on a clear understanding of the relevant criteria for success at each of the key stages.
125. Drama is taught within English lessons at Key Stage 3. It is an optional GCSE subject. It had just been introduced by the school as a specialist subject at Key Stage 4 at the time of the last inspection. Numbers of pupils studying drama have increased annually. Currently about 25 per cent of students at Key Stage 4 choose it as an option. GCE Advanced level theatre studies has now also been introduced. For those who choose it, levels of attainment at GCSE are well above national average. In 1999, 78 per cent gained A*-C grades, compared with 67 per cent nationally. All candidates gained A*-G grades, whilst the national figure was 99 per cent. Two students obtained the A* grade for the first time since the subject was introduced at the school. Standards have improved consistently over a three-year period. Boys do as well as girls in the subject. There was a 100 per cent pass rate in Advanced level theatre studies in 1999, though none of the students gained A or B grades.
126. At Key Stage 3, students' work in improvisation and role-play shows that they can speak and listen confidently in a range of contexts. One Year 7 group was able to develop effective group presentations on the theme of conflict, based on work in English lessons about the discovery of Tutankhamun's 'Lost Tomb' in Egypt. They worked well together and developed ideas imaginatively. At Key Stage 4 and at GCE Advanced level, students are well-motivated and go about their work with some energy and commitment. They make good progress and are able to reflect on and justify the use of specific dramatic techniques. Practical work for group presentations at both levels showed some flair and imagination.
127. The quality of teaching was good in all lessons seen. There is detailed and helpful planning for the subject that matches tasks carefully to the students' current levels

of skill and understanding. It sets out clear assessment criteria that help students to know what they need to be successful. The head of drama has worked hard on the introduction of the subject in the school, and is keen to develop it further - in particular through the introduction of more skills-based work at Key Stage 3. He makes a good contribution to extra-curricular provision, producing a school play each year in co-operation with other colleagues and arranging theatre visits to enrich students' experience of the curriculum. Resources and accommodation for drama are limited however. There is a shortage of technical equipment for practical work at GCSE and GCE Advanced level.

MATHEMATICS

128. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3, the percentage who reached level 5 and above was 86, which is well above the national average of 62 per cent. The proportion of pupils who reached level 7 and above was 19 per cent, slightly higher than the national average of 14 per cent. The difference in performance between girls and boys is in line with the national trend, with boys achieving slightly higher standards. Standards are very high in comparison with similar schools. The trend over the last three years, in terms of average National Curriculum points score, is broadly in line with the national picture.
129. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in the 1999 GCSE was 60 per cent, much higher than the national average of 46 per cent. The percentage of pupils reaching A*-G grades was 99 per cent, just above the national figure of 96 per cent. Overall, girls reach a higher standard than boys, as is the case nationally, but the actual difference in standards between them is greater than that seen nationally, showing a recent improvement in girls' attainment. Standards at GCSE over the last three years, although fluctuating, are always above average. Over the last three years however, the proportion of students reaching the very highest grades (A* and A) is above the national average in two years only. Standards as a whole are very high both in comparison with all schools nationally and with similar schools. With the exception of boys' performance in 1999, over the last three years, standards in mathematics are at least average for the school, and generally higher.
130. In the 1999 GCE advanced level examination, standards are above average. Over the last three years however, the proportion of A to E grades reached and the mean points scored are both consistently at least average – and usually above it. The proportion of A and B grades achieved in 1998 and 1997 is, however, below the national average for these years. The number of girls entering the subject is much smaller than the number of boys, despite their high level of success at GCSE. It is not possible to draw any significant conclusions about the relative performance of boys and girls at Advanced level GCE.
131. Standards on entry, based on their Key Stage 2 test results and other nationally standardised tests, are well above average in mathematics. The levels of achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs, are satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 the achievement of students is good, with the exception of the more able, whose achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in Year 12 and 13 is good overall.
132. Standards of work seen are good, and sometimes very good. The tests and

examination results do not quite mirror the standards at the end of each key stage observed during the inspection. An analysis of students' work, together with lesson observations, indicates standards above national expectations, rather than well above. This discrepancy is accounted for by an increase in attainment just prior to the national test or public examination.

133. Nearly all students work hard and are well behaved. They co-operate with each other when working together and get on amicably in the classroom. They sustain concentration, persevere with problems and are keen to answer questions. Attitudes to learning are mainly good or very good, although a small number of boys in Key Stage 3 are not always willing to realise their full potential and are sometimes inclined to be silly. The overwhelmingly positive attitude to the subject makes a significant contribution to the high standards attained in mathematics.
134. A higher attaining Year 7 group, in a lesson which involved visualising which flat shapes would form a cuboid, were able usefully to discuss their answers and then to check them by constructing the actual shapes themselves. This involved a certain amount of cutting and gluing paper, all accomplished with the minimum of disruption. Students in a lower attaining Year 10 group, working on solving problems requiring division by 10 and 100 without the use of a calculator, were able confidently to explain their working to the rest of the group. Mistakes were made but these were sensitively received by the rest of the group. The whole group made good progress. A higher attaining group in Key Stage 4 was able, by helping each other and persevering as individuals, to make big gains in their ability to manipulate algebraic expressions. This particular group has, over several years, experienced a variety of teachers, but it retains a very positive ethos as a group.
135. Although standards are high, and sometimes very high, standards could be even higher if current strengths are developed still further. In Key Stage 4 students are very aware of their targets, potential grades, and the need to maintain progress. This has a positive effect on the standards achieved. A matching situation in Key Stage 3, harnessing the effective assessment procedures already used, but focusing on National Curriculum levels, would have a similar effect. Rectifying the almost total absence of information technology in mathematics lessons throughout the school would further motivate students. This is already the case, on a small scale, for a lower attaining Year 9 group. Firm data on the attainment and progress of gifted and talented students is somewhat elusive and difficult to quantify. There needs to be far more tracking of individual students using nationally valid data. It is also difficult to be sure that gifted and talented pupils receive sufficient attention at present in large top sets of 35 or more pupils.
136. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and it is good or better in almost two-thirds of lessons. This strength lies in the enthusiasm of teachers for the subject and the quality of relationships in the classroom. Teachers know their students well and are sensitive to their needs, including those with special educational needs, so that work is pitched at the right level of challenge and still ensures confidence. In many lessons students feel secure enough to state spontaneously, in front of the whole class, that they don't quite understand a particular point. They are not afraid to make mistakes. Students are always addressed by name, which helps in question and answer sessions as those named can be brought into the discussion, thus involving everyone. This method was used effectively in a challenging lesson about probability for a higher attaining Year 9 set. Students had to justify using the multiplication rule for the probability of

two events occurring. Skilful management and use of subject knowledge by the teacher ensured a high level of mathematical discussion and, as a result, high standards were reached.

137. Management of the department, although affected by staff illness, is satisfactory. A considerable effort has been made to devise ways to minimise any detrimental effects of this on students. Teachers have adjusted their timetables to prioritise the needs of examination groups. This has been extended to involving a teacher from another school in order to provide after school lessons for Year 13 students who otherwise would have been unable to complete an A-level module. The department has a clear commitment to raising standards, relationships are good and it functions as a mutually supportive team. However, the monitoring of teaching within the departments needs to be put on a more formal footing. This will encourage the sharing of good practice in order to improve further the standards and the quality of learning.
138. Since the last inspection there have been several areas of improvement. First and foremost, standards reached in Key Stage 3 national tests, GCSE and GCE advanced level mathematics have improved. In the last report it was stated that some pupils were not confident in their basic numerical skills - this is no longer the case. Similarly, comments regarding too much reliance being placed on textbooks are no longer valid. However, the situation regarding poor use of information technology has not improved.

SCIENCE

139. In the 1999 statutory national tests that are taken by all students at the age of 14, standards were well above the national average for all schools and above the national average for similar schools. Seventy-two per cent of students reached or exceeded the national expectation, level 5. Thirty-eight per cent of students attained higher than level 5, with 6 per cent reaching level 7 and above. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points score has been broadly in line with national trends over the last four years. Boys and girls achieve similar standards. Whilst science results were above the average they were not as high as those in mathematics and English.
140. GCSE results in the double award science course taken by the majority of students are well above the national average. In 1999, 72 per cent attained grades in the range A* -C. This was well above the national average of 48 per cent. All candidates gained grades A*-G. This is above the national average of 98 per cent. Boys did better than girls, but the differences are not significant. Of the 29 students entered for GCSE single science award, 16 per cent attained grades in the range A* - C. This was well above the national average of 7.1 per cent. All candidates gained grades A* to G. This was above the national average of 92 per cent. In 1999, 35 per cent of boys and 39 per cent of girls achieved grades in the A* to B range. These above-average results have been improving over the last three years, with a large improvement in the number of girls attaining the higher grades in 1999

141. GCE Advanced level results in 1999 in all three sciences improved significantly. The chemistry results were well above national average, whilst biology and physics were just below national averages. The trends over the last three years have fluctuated in chemistry and physics and remained constant in biology. Value added work at this level shows an upward trend in performance over the last three years in all three subjects. The gender balance in each subject varies from year to year with girls forming a minority group in physics. Overall more boys study science than girls at GCE Advanced level.
142. Standards on entry to the school are now well above national averages. Sixty-five per cent of Year 7 students scored 98+ on the CAT tests in 1998 and 70 per cent in 1999. At the end of Key Stage 3, 64 per cent of year 9 students scored over 98+ on the CATS tests in 1998 and 63 per cent in 1999. Students are achieving satisfactory results at the end of Key Stage 3 since they are well above the national average. Both boys and girls achieve good standards at the end of Key Stage 4, performing well above the national averages and showing a strong subject relative performance indicator. The levels of achievement at the end of Key Stage 5 are good overall, as demonstrated by the value added work done by the school.
143. Overall, standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are high. Students have the basic oral, written and numerical skills to enable them to engage with the carefully-planned activities their teachers present to them. They take part enthusiastically in discussion and experimental work showing that they understand the role of hypothesising, planning fair tests, taking measurements, interpreting results often through drawing graphs and coming to conclusions in science. Students clearly thought carefully about their work. They helped one another towards understanding in group discussions. In one Year 7 group, students helped others find their way to the appropriate part of a work sheet on the skeleton very unobtrusively. Relationships were very good and allowed students to express any difficulties with confidence, such as being unable to dissect a heart. When asked to read or spell words in lower sets, pupils did so willingly and the attitude of the class was supportive. Their written work demonstrated that they took pride in its presentation.
144. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are very high. Students continue to develop their scientific skills in all areas of the National Curriculum. Students are helped towards control over their own learning by the GCSE booklet with which they are provided at the beginning of the course. They are also helped to an understanding of the examination requirements by the teaching they receive. The monitoring of their work and the exchange of information on progress between them and their teachers is greatly valued by the students. The quality of their written work is very high for all levels of achievement. The students have a strong desire to succeed and a commitment to further education, which supports them in their learning. High ability students get opportunities to share their more creative thoughts with their peers. In one Year 11 class on force as a vector, a group of students wondered whether Newton's third law applied in outer space. A lively exchange took place. No conclusions were reached but both teacher and class decided to seek further information to settle the discussion.
145. In Years 12 and 13 standards are very high. Students know and use a high level of technical vocabulary. They listen intently to the information presented to them. Although they seemed rather passive, teachers encouraged questions and when the occasion arose the students were not afraid to challenge their teachers intellectually in pursuit of their own understanding. Pupils were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. They had very good written, oral and numerical skills to support their learning in science. The excellent level of the teachers' subject knowledge contributed greatly to the learning that took place.

146. Since the last inspection, changes in the teaching of science have helped to raise further the standards achieved. Teachers now explain the purpose of each lesson more clearly so that students understand what is being asked of them. They use questions skilfully to encourage the students to link their work with previous experiences. This has helped the students develop their ability to explain their understanding of science orally. There is a variety of teaching methods used with different sets and at different ages. These, together with good use of individual education plans, help students with special educational needs to achieve very high standards. The introduction of the Certificate of Achievement as a motivator for the lower sets has proved very successful. The analysis of results from end of key stage tests and examinations has helped the staff to monitor student progress and led to planned intervention, such as the production of the GCSE Guide. Information technology opportunities have been identified in all key stages. Although these are currently rather limited, the department has identified expansion of this area in its development plan.
147. Health and safety issues have been addressed satisfactorily and whilst the provision of extra accommodation has not been achieved, plans have been discussed to increase the laboratory provision for the department.
148. The management of the department, whilst satisfactory overall due to the work of a conscientious team, is still unsatisfactory at the strategic level. There is no long-term vision and few discernible directions for further development within the subject.
149. Science is well taught at all key stages and very well taught in Advanced level GCE courses. Seventy-two per cent of lessons seen were good or better. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject, which enables them to deliver clear, well-planned lessons in all key stages. From Year 8 onwards, students are organised into ability sets, which helps the teachers to match their teaching methods to the needs of the class. Support staff can also be targeted so that students with special educational needs can be helped to meet the targets on their individual education plans and thus make very good progress. Teachers are very well informed about their students, their needs and their academic progress. They use this information to help them in their lesson planning and their discussions with students during lessons. Teachers have high expectations to which the students respond well. Most have very good classroom management skills that enable them to keep the small number of potentially challenging students under control. Good relationships and humorous exchanges between students and teachers help them to achieve a tension free but disciplined atmosphere. These attributes, together with the students positive attitudes, all contribute to the high quality of learning that takes place at all key stages. Although in most lessons the pace of work was good, there were a few instances where students lost interest because they were not being sufficiently challenged.
150. The work members of the department have done on monitoring student performance has helped them to focus on raising standards further. The department is on line to meet the targets set for examinations in 2000. Further development of the value added work done at Key Stage 5 and analysis of the 1999 data for the end of Key Stage 3 achievements would add to the department's data bank to support curriculum planning for even greater success in the future.

ART

151. Whilst no data is available to indicate standards in art on entry to the school, at the end of Key Stage 3 standards are broadly in line with national expectations in both attainment targets. End of key stage school assessments in art also reach this judgement.
152. Standards by the end of Key Stage 4 remain slightly below the national average but there has been a steady upward trend in A*-C results during the past three years. The number of pupils achieving A*-G grades exceeds the national average. Standards at GCE Advanced level continue to be well above the national average. Standards overall between the age of 11 and 16 do not compare favourably with those in other subjects.
153. By the end of Key Stage 3, many students have a sound knowledge of the work of various artists and use a range of technical vocabulary with understanding. Higher attaining students demonstrate strong drawing and compositional skills based on observation and experimentation. The work on portraits, with this theme being extended through experimentation into various other media, is a good example. The work of lower attainers is often unfinished, technically unaccomplished and output is thin. For some, an over-reliance on photocopied or traced images inhibits creativity and originality.
154. The one-hour time allocation, and the use of open plan accommodation as well as corridor spaces, both being used as thoroughfares to other areas, are obvious constraints that contribute to a lack of progress and can on occasions spoil the quality of learning.
155. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining students have learnt to use a range of drawing skills with expertise and effectiveness. Colour is used boldly, and skilfully blended, as in the work on natural forms. There are some imaginative outcomes, although research and development is not often prolific. The work of lower attaining students shows little productivity and a low skills base. The department does not meet statutory requirements concerning the provision of information technology as part of the taught courses.
156. The quality of learning in Years 12 and 13 show a significant improvement in a range of art skills. Methods of application and extensiveness of research lead to highly original and personalised outcomes. Many students demonstrate very high levels of competence in representational drawing techniques, and well composed, imaginative and highly developed painting styles. Time allocation and the availability of an exclusive sixth form art room contribute to these high standards and the high quality of their learning, in marked contrast to some lessons for younger students.
157. Numerous changes have been made to departmental policy and practice as a result of the last inspection. The time allocation at Key Stage 3 has been increased to include Year 9 pupils. Planning documentation is more thorough and detailed. Key Stage 4 assessment procedures have been revised and sharpened to highlight areas for pupil development and future planning. Resources and learning materials, including library stock and CD Roms, have been increased. Regrettably, these measures are not having the desired effect in raising standards at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 because there are no systems in place to monitor and evaluate

outcomes and consistency of practice, or to use any of the coursework and homework assessment data to inform future planning. Consequently, there remain a small number of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students who are still underachieving, and the most able and talented are not sufficiently challenged.

158. The quality of teaching overall at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. On occasions at Key Stage 4 teaching is good. The exercise on landscapes in Year 10, imaginatively developed from research on Fauvist or Impressionist themes, was a good example. Much of the clay work produced by lower attaining pupils in Year 11 demonstrated good construction and modelling skills. Teaching in the GCE Advanced level course was good overall.
159. Standards and the quality of learning were markedly improved in those lessons seen where a collective start, clear aims, a variety of teaching methods and high expectations of pace and output were evident. In the majority of lessons at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, teaching had less impact on learning where aims and objectives were unclear, where tasks were insufficiently challenging, where pace was undemanding, and where delivery was uninspiring. The end of lesson review, reiterating aims and identifying strengths and weaknesses, is not used effectively.
160. Students with special needs are well integrated and make satisfactory progress. On occasions they are well supported in class.
161. Attitudes to work are good in Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in Year 12 and Year 13. Students behave well and many have an enthusiasm for learning. They demonstrate a responsible attitude to work and express pleasure in their attainment and their acquisition of knowledge about artists. Whilst the department recognises the value of the spiritual dimension of art education as a contribution to personal development, opportunities for reflection are few.
162. Whilst the majority of students make satisfactory progress in lessons, the pace is often slow. Progress over time is more evident at Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13, aided by regular homework and an increasing requirement for research and preparatory work.
163. Management of the department is not clear in its vision concerning the value of art in education. Leadership does not ensure clear direction for the development of the subject, nor does it promote the raising of standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 through the use of appropriate strategies aimed at monitoring teaching and learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

164. Standards at Key Stage 3 overall are in line with national expectations with the highest standards in practical work in food and wood. Students learn to develop their ideas and can apply designing and making principles across a range of materials and processes. Teacher assessments for the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 and 1999 indicate standards are very high indeed in comparison to the national expectation but these were based upon a single unit of work in one material for 1998 assessments and just two units of work in 1999. Their reliability therefore, as a true indication of standards over the Key Stage, is in question.
165. At Key Stage 4 GCSE results have been sustained at a high standard over the past

three years. In 1999 examination results for the higher A* to C grades were high overall in comparison to the national average for design and technology. They were very high in food technology with 82 per cent of students achieving a grade C or above and nine students gaining A* grades. In graphic products 76 per cent of students and in resistant materials 55 per cent of students achieved a grade C or above. Results in systems and control work were below the national average with 37 per cent achieving a C or above. Overall for grades A to G there was a 100 per cent pass rate for design and technology. Girls outperform boys but the results of both boys and girls are above the national average for their age groups.

166. Standards are inconsistent in GCE Advanced level courses. Results have fluctuated over the past three years with 50 per cent of students gaining the higher A and B grades in 1998 but a decline for the higher grades to 18 per cent in 1999. There is a minimum requirement being a C at GCSE. A small number of able students leave for courses at other colleges and this, together with the variation in the number of entrants' year-on-year, contributes to fluctuations.
167. In lessons at Key Stage 3 students demonstrate good understanding and application wide ability range in the students admitted to the Advanced level course with a of the design process across a range of activities using textiles, wood, plastic, clay, food and electronics. Students can use a range of hand and machine tools confidently and safely to realise their intentions and they learn to use their drawing skills to develop and refine their ideas although imaginative interpretation is sometimes constrained by the structure of the activities. Within units of work students develop appropriate key knowledge and understanding of the materials they are using and the safe working methods to support their practical making. For example Year 8 students starting a unit of work using wood showed good recall of the names of materials, tools and safety rules learnt in Year 7. Others in their first lesson widened their knowledge and understanding of the technology and use of textiles through lively class discussion and watching a video. Over the Key Stage students have more frequent experience of working with wood and plastics than other materials. Students are able to make use of computers for some aspects of their work, principally for word processing, but do not develop their skills in computer-aided design because of the lack of appropriate resources.
168. In the work seen in lessons at Key Stage 4 and in students' folders standards are above the national expectation particularly in food technology where the expectations and pace of lessons help students to achieve. Similarly in graphics, standards are high with students able to apply their technical knowledge to solve a range of problems. For example, students in Year 10 were able to combine their knowledge of constructing an ellipse with their graphic skills to create striking and attractive masks. Current Year 11 coursework contains a good range of well-finished constructions in wood supported by good quality design work. In food technology students have benefited from the excellent local industrial links. The development of their course work is of a high standard as a result and shows very good understanding of in-flight catering and industrial food processes. The majority of students show good development and application of the design process to their work; they apply their literacy skills to their written work and some students are able to make use of computers in the presentation of their work. Presentation skills overall are of a good standard.
169. In systems and control students knowledge and understanding are underdeveloped.

Lack of regular experience at Key Stage 3 together with over direction of tasks by the teacher limit achievement and result in little imaginative problem solving using electronics on the part of students.

170. Although only one Year 13 lesson was observed, students who choose to study at GCE Advanced level display a good degree of independence in their work. For example, one student effectively conducted and presented research into toys and equipment for visually impaired young children whilst another student was busy developing a prototype storage system for golf clubs. Design work by a student with specific learning needs was well presented and demonstrated good achievement through the sixth form. Illustration and presentation skills are well developed in some cases and all students show ability to develop their ideas using sketches and notes. Students benefit from partnership with local industry that provides a design link project to develop understanding of commercial design. Folders of initial work by year 12 students indicate research, designing and making skills are variable on entry to the sixth form but that students do achieve satisfactorily in the majority of cases, building upon their prior knowledge and skills.
171. Behaviour in lessons at both key stages and in Years 12 and 13 is very good with the great majority of students displaying very positive attitudes to their work. When presented with opportunities for group work students respond well by listening to the opinions and ideas of others and working constructively. For example, in food technology, students shared resources and worked well in teams to identify the names of vegetables and in a Year 8 resistant materials lesson students responded well to questioning by the teacher and were involved collectively in their learning. Concentration and listening skills are good even when sometimes there are lengthy sessions of talking by teachers. Attitudes are especially good and lead to good achievement when teachers ensure that tasks are challenging and have high expectations of students. For example, in a food lesson enthusiastic presentation of the subject matter with clear targets for students to achieve resulted in sustained effort over the lesson and good levels of motivation.
172. Teaching was good or better in four-fifths of lessons at Key Stage 4 and almost half the lessons seen at Key Stage 3 with no unsatisfactory teaching seen. The very best teaching employs a range of methods to inject pace, for example through involving students in discussion and questioning which challenges their knowledge and understanding and builds confidence. Some teachers are particularly good at presenting subject matter in an enthusiastic and lively manner which promotes good attitudes to learning and this is a feature of food and graphics lessons in particular. Much of the teaching which is satisfactory lacks these features and although the subject material is taught competently it does not have the same impact upon students' learning. For example, in a lesson introducing practical clay work, much of the time was spent telling students about the origins of clay. This did not actively involve them. There is some non-specialist teaching which, although competent, relies upon department units of work that give too little scope for imaginative teaching. Whilst the units of work are clearly planned and highly structured they are too prescriptive and limit the opportunities for students to show initiative and develop more individual and imaginative work. There is a need to ensure that tasks are well matched to the stage of learning to enable teachers to challenge all students and improve progression across all the units of work.
173. Since the last inspection the quality of reports to parents has improved. There is still a need, at Key Stage 3 in particular, to provide regular and consistent assessment that ensures students, as they progress, have clear information about the strengths

and weaknesses in their work and how to improve. This will also enable teachers to identify more clearly the areas for further development in future lessons.

174. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained above the national average and National Curriculum requirements are now met fully at Key Stage 3. The head of department has improved the format for the planning of lessons but there is still scope to improve the range of content and opportunity within schemes of work at Key Stage 3. There is an urgent need to provide more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department that guides development planning and shares the good practice in food and graphics. Department leadership requires a much sharper focus and vision of how the department is to move forward with curriculum development to ensure high standards across all areas of design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

175. Standards are well above average at the end of Key Stage 3. In the 1999 statutory teacher assessments 81 per cent of students obtained level 5 or better. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are also well above average. Students do better in geography than in their other subjects. Achievement is high. In 1999, 83 per cent of pupils gained grades A* to C and 100 per cent gained grades A* to G. There were a significant number of high achievers with 27 per cent of students gaining grades A and A*. There was little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Standards at GCE Advanced level were close to the national average with 36 per cent of students gaining grades A or B. These results were below the average of other subjects in the school, although in most years they are in line with or above the average of other subjects.
176. In work seen during the inspection the standard of presentation in written work was very high in Key Stage 3. Students enter the school with well-developed literacy and numeracy skills and their work in Year 7 displays a good grasp of all basic geographical skills. In Year 8 students understand and make sound judgements of social and environmental issues using supportive evidence effectively. These skills are further developed in Year 9, as are skills in organising, interpreting and presenting data. GCSE students use their field work experience to produce individual studies of a high standard, employing an excellent range of presentation techniques. These qualities are carried over and further developed within the course work of GCE Advanced level students who make much more extensive and effective use of information technologies.
177. From their observations, Year 7 students make correct judgments of weather conditions and record these accurately and systematically. Year 9 students, in their studies of farming areas severely affected by soil erosion, can demonstrate a very good understanding of the factors that caused this damage and of the remedial action that has been taken. In their work comparing the impact of natural disasters in richer and poorer countries, Year 11 students can identify a good number of the reasons for the impact on communities often being much more severely felt in poorer countries. Year 13 students can demonstrate good levels of understanding of urban regeneration in their comprehensive and detailed annotation of illustrations.
178. Overall, good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards continue to rise. Results at GCE Advanced level have continued to improve and in the GCSE they have risen considerably. The examination courses are enriched by better quality fieldwork and learning is supported by a much wider range of learning

resources. This has led to some improvement in the range of teaching and learning styles. Learning at GCE Advanced level is enhanced by more structured and extensive use of information technologies. The assessment of progress is more structured and systematic and both GCSE and GCE Advanced level students have specific targets. There continues to be no structured use of information technology in Key Stage 3 and very limited use in Key Stage 4.

179. The overall standard of teaching is good. When good teaching combines with the positive attitudes of the great majority, students make good progress across all years. A strength is the very good quality of relationships and effective methods that ensure that lessons progress in a positive and ordered manner. This is particularly evident in a Year 8 lesson where these qualities helped students to make rapid progress in understanding the environmental impact of the petrochemicals industry. Some students used alliteration skilfully in creating eye-catching newspaper style headlines to summarise their views. A satisfactory range of teaching and learning styles is employed but there was no use of different resources to meet students' different needs in lessons observed. This was reflected in a Year 11 lesson where satisfactory progress was made in students' understanding of the nature, impact and management of acid rain damage. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is good and within the GCE Advanced level course it is very good. Year 12 students made very good progress in their understanding of the causes and possible solutions to flooding in Bangladesh, aided by skilful guidance, effective questioning and the use of good quality up-to-date sources. Students in Years 12 and 13 respond positively to the respect and good humour that characterises relationships in class. Most homework set aids the consolidation of classroom learning. The great majority of lessons are well balanced and pupils work purposefully and with very good concentration throughout.
180. The curriculum is enriched through the use of a wide range of materials from environmental groups and other agencies involved with development issues. These contribute well to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils in all years. Management is effective and underpinned by strong professional relationships. Development planning focuses on a range of relevant and desirable improvements, including support for lower attaining students and additional challenge for the most able. Currently this strategy lacks sufficiently specific, tangible objectives and there are no structured arrangements for review and evaluation. The departmental area is enhanced with a range of simulating displays, including material that gives good insights into fieldwork activities.

HISTORY

181. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above average. In the 1999 statutory teacher assessments the proportion reaching the national expectation, level 5, was well above average. Well over half the pupils at the end of Year 9 obtained level 6 and above. This was twice the national figure. Standards have been consistently at this high level for the last three years, with the girls performing better than boys at a difference significantly higher than nationally.
182. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades at GCSE in 1999 was above the national average. The proportion of those attaining A*-G grades was in line with the national average. There has been an upward trend of improvement in the higher grades since the last inspection in 1995 and they have been consistently above the national average for the last three years. Boys do better than their age group nationally and there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The proportion of students reaching the highest grades A* and A is also above the national average. These results are some of the best in the school and students do better in history than in most of their other subjects.
183. Standards are lower in Years 12 and 13. The proportion obtaining A-B grades and also A-E grades in GCE Advanced level in 1999 was well below the national average. Boys performed significantly better than girls at the higher grades although the number of entries was small. The results in 1998 were much better, with the proportion of higher grades above the national average, but there is no discernible trend of improvement since the last inspection.
184. Achievement is satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 3. Most students have good literacy skills for their age when they enter the school. They achieve broadly in line with reasonable expectations by the age of 14. The good GCSE examination results indicate that the level of achievement is good by the end of Year 11. Boys improved greatly. Their standards had been below girls in their Key Stage 3 results but were close to the those of the girls at GCSE. However, the level of achievement at GCE Advanced level is unsatisfactory for the last year, even allowing for the entry onto the course of some pupils with borderline entry qualifications.
185. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the key characteristics of the subject and of chronology. Nearly all can effectively select and record information from written and pictorial sources as they have at least competent note-making skills. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported. Teachers build on the students' good basic literacy skills to develop their skills of enquiry and organisation with more opportunities now being provided for independent research tasks, as seen in Year 7 work on Islam society and challenging enquiry work into Nazi Germany in Year 9. Most students have a good understanding of causes, though they are less sure how to prioritise and evaluate them. Year 8 pupils show good skills of interpreting sources in looking at the various views of the Gunpowder Plot. Students are now being given opportunities to use their writing skills in various forms, an area criticised in the last report. Many Year 9 students produce extended writing of a high standard and write moving poems and diaries with strong empathy on trench conditions in the First World War. Higher and middle attaining students do less well when asked to evaluate sources for usefulness and reliability. Nor do

they have the opportunity to develop the use of information technology as an information source and as a way of organising their enquiry work as access to computers is very restricted and their use is not written into the schemes of work.

186. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above the national average. Nearly all students have good historical knowledge, make notes well from a variety of sources and can make accurate deductions. Most students have a broad understanding of change and continuity and good skills of research and organisation, as seen in their coursework on developments in surgery and public health. However, a secure understanding of the relative importance of medical innovators is lacking in middle and lower attaining students. Higher attaining students produce very good extended writing with accurate analysis and vivid empathy, for instance in their work on the suffragettes. Writing at length is competently done by middle and lower attainers. Those with special educational needs are given effective in-class support by the learning support department, while students withdrawn for the Certificate of Achievement are making particularly good progress with the aid of resources well matched to their needs.
187. Standards in the current Year 13 are broadly in line with the national average. Students make further progress in note-making and handling sources. The good literacy skills of the best students lead to well expressed and coherently written essay work, often quoting appropriately and effectively from various sources. However, the lack of wide reading, especially of the works of the latest authorities and limited opportunity for lively group or class discussion, is impeding development of sharp analytical skills and the confidence to challenge each other's views. Consequently, the students are too dependent on the teacher and are insufficiently involved actively in lessons. This restricts the development of their critical faculties.
188. Good departmental leadership has resulted in a number of significant improvements since the last inspection. The rise in standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 is most attributable to the use of a wider range of teaching strategies and a greater emphasis on the development of history skills, especially writing in more varied forms and the fostering of enquiry skills. The good booklets produced by the head of department provide valuable additional resources to develop source work skills and encourage more independent enquiry work by Key Stage 3 students, a weakness at the time of the last inspection. Teachers are setting higher expectations and, consequently, more challenging tasks to encourage more independent work. This is being promoted by the emphasis on skills and challenge in the revised schemes of work for Key Stage 3. Assessment procedures are now better with more regular testing, effective moderation to National Curriculum levels and central recording to track progress. More systematic feedback to students to explain these levels and targets will improve this process further. More rigorous targeting and monitoring of the progress of individual pupils at Key Stage 4 through the school's monitoring programme is also raising standards at GCSE. Whilst such tight monitoring also exists in Years 12 and 13, the lack of strong intellectual challenge and developing of an independence of study is hindering progress, especially of the middle and lower attaining students.
189. The quality of teaching seen in nearly all the lessons was satisfactory or better. It was good in half and only very rarely unsatisfactory. It was strongest at Key Stage 3 and 4 where it was good in nearly two-thirds of all lessons and occasionally very good. Teaching is more consistent than at the time of the last inspection. This improvement is largely due to the increased emphasis on the development of history

skills, based on the students' good literacy skills and carefully chosen activities that involve students far more actively in their learning. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge, plan their lessons well and set appropriate learning objectives that are clearly explained to the students, although not always reviewed at the end of the lesson. This good planning includes good liaison with the learning support department and features the effective use of support staff in the classroom, although materials were insufficiently matched to the needs of lower attaining students. Ongoing assessment procedures are good, especially the helpful and thorough marking and the perceptive monitoring in class of individual progress by many teachers. Resources are well used. Every student has his or her own textbook and regular educational visits for nearly all year groups provide a valuable additional resource that enriches their learning and enjoyment of the subject. Students are managed well, relationships are very good and based on mutual respect. High standards of behaviour are expected and set. This creates a good working atmosphere in the classroom and leads to effective learning, especially through students' active involvement in enquiry work at Key Stage 3. Very good attitudes were seen in two-thirds of lessons. Students are well motivated and respond well to the responsibility of working by themselves. They frequently display a good degree of initiative in bringing in their own resources for research work.

190. Some inconsistency in teaching standards still exists. Learning is less effective when inappropriate methods are used by the teacher, for instance, the teacher talks too much and, as a result, there is inadequate opportunity for active student involvement in the Years 12 and 13 lessons. Infrequent use of lively group discussion at all key stages is failing to exploit sufficiently the good oral skills of most pupils, while higher attaining pupils in Key Stages 4 and 5 are not always being adequately challenged with more analytical extension tasks. The department is aware of this and is now beginning to address the issue. On the other hand, lower attaining students need more stepped guidance through the demands of organising their enquiry work, for example the Year 9 project on Nazi Germany. Tighter and more systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching is required to ensure that the informal sharing of good practice within the department results in a consistent raising of standards of learning in the classroom.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

191. There is insufficient evidence to evaluate current standards at the end of Key Stage 3. In 1999 the statutory teacher assessments were not reported and those for the two previous years were based on inaccurate information. At the end of Key Stage 4, A*-C grades were achieved by 31 per cent of students in the GCSE short course examination in 1999. This is significantly lower than the national average. The A*-A rate is also significantly lower than the national average. The school's A*-C rate is significantly lower than in the two previous years. However, 1999 was the first year in which all of the year group had the opportunity to follow a taught course and take an examination in information and communication technology, rather than the minority who had chosen to do so in the previous years when it was an option subject. Therefore, a wider range of interest and aptitude is reflected in the results and the school's A*-G rates were better than those nationally, with all students achieving within this range. Results in the 1999 GCE Advanced level examination were significantly better than the national average. 36 per cent of students obtained grades A-B. This was nearly 16 per cent higher than the national average. All students obtained a grade in the range A-E, nearly 20 per cent more than did so nationally.

192. Because so little work takes place in Key Stage 3, there is no basis upon which to make a judgement on achievement during this key stage, other than to conclude that the school makes little contribution to this. Similarly, the unreliability of assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1997 and 1998 and their absence in 1999 make it impossible to form judgements on the level of achievement of those who took the GCSE Short Course in 1999, or of current Year 11 students. Students performed less well than they did in their other GCSE subjects at a level in comparison with other subjects, indicating that the lack of learning opportunities in Key Stage 3 still impacted upon overall standards at the end of Key Stage 4.
193. No Key Stage 3 lessons in which information and communication technology was a significant factor were seen during the inspection. It is not taught as a separate subject and work indicates that students have few opportunities to work with computers within the other subjects. Work seen was almost exclusively confined to word processing, indicating that there is little development of the full range of skills during this key stage. Many students in Year 9 have basic skills in word processing and a few are able to use these to create presentations of a good standard, incorporating different font styles and pictures from various sources. However, the word processor is invariably used to present a final version and does not support the drafting. Furthermore, discussion with teachers and students indicates that the best quality work is produced by students who have access to the resources at home. The overall standard of work by Year 11 students is close to the national average, although the skills of a sizeable minority are below this level. The standard of work of almost a third is good. Most students have a good grasp of basic words and definitions, have developed a knowledge of a range of programs and techniques and demonstrate a clear sense of purpose in their work. They understand the contrasts between various types of software, such as floppy disks and CD Roms and know the structure of a database. The majority can use word processors and desktop publishers, at least to a basic level and can compile and interrogate information in databases and spreadsheets. Many do not confidently explain the purposes of less familiar resources such as modems or midi systems. The best work is enhanced by good literacy skills, when reports that students need to write about the work undertaken contain detailed explanations and identify well the problems addressed. However, lower levels of literacy reduce the standards of the reports and examination answers of almost a third of the students. Because there is no taught course in Years 12 and 13 and little teaching took place in the context of the other subjects during the inspection, a judgement on standards at this stage is not possible.
194. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in two respects. A GCSE short course has been introduced for all students in Key Stage 4, so that the legal requirement is now fulfilled in this key stage and assessment is now satisfactory. To support this, the quality of hardware has undergone substantial improvement, which has had a major impact on the standards achieved during the short course. All of the applications that students need to learn about are available and there is good access to the internet to support the development of independent research skills.
195. However, improvement has been poor in a number of other respects. The legal requirement is still not met for Key Stage 3 in which there is still no progressive scheme of work, very few opportunities are provided to apply skills in different subjects and there is no valid assessment at the end of the key stage. Improvements are planned to begin next September. However, in neither key stage

is there co-ordination of opportunities to develop, apply and consolidate capability across all subjects. The number of computers has increased but is still barely approaching the recommended levels for a school of this size. Inefficient management of the existing resources, which remained unused for large portions of the inspection week, is a further weakness in provision. The school has still to develop an agreed view of the place of information and communication technology in the curriculum and, while there is a head of department who teaches the taught course at Key Stage 4, there is no clearly defined role of co-ordinator of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

196. When teaching takes place it is generally good and sometimes very good, having an impact on learning that is almost always good or better. The major weakness is that students are only able to benefit to any great extent in Key Stage 4. Teaching strongly supports progress in developing knowledge of the range of applications and techniques, competence and confidence in using these to carry out tasks. Students are moved rapidly to a level of basic knowledge and skill that goes some way towards compensating for lack of opportunities to do so in Key Stage 3. Good subject command supports challenging questioning and supportive response to students' needs and questions. Tasks are explained clearly and high expectations are demonstrated by identifying and expecting good practice in, for example, sharing work in groups. The organisation of lessons motivates and encourages responsibility and creativity. A good range of opportunities is provided for students to make choices of software and how to use it when, for example, constructing a database for a car showroom. Teachers are good at identifying the extent to which individual students can develop their work further and skilled in offering the appropriate degree of support. On the limited occasions when students in Years 12 and 13 use computers in lessons, in science for example, the quality of their learning improves. They are encouraged to use commercial software to create presentations and also to use the internet. Unsatisfactory features in teaching are rare. Lower attaining and very capable students are sometimes insufficiently challenged within the planning of the lesson. The close of lessons is sometimes unsatisfactory, lacking suitable time to reflect upon what has been covered.
197. Students show good attitudes to their learning in class. Attention is high when work is being explained. They collaborate well to make group work productive, with boys and girls working together and neither dominating or monopolising equipment. They discuss spontaneously their work with each other, offering and receiving suggestions and assistance willingly. Many students persevere in addressing problems collaboratively, when, for example, one group who were creating a control sequence carefully worked through it to identify and rectify a mistake that had prevented it from operating as intended. Students respond well to teachers and sustain productive conversations about work with them, often supporting the relationship by sharing humour.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

198. Standards were above the national average in the 1999 statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3. Seventy-five per cent achieved the national expectation, level 4. More than half of the students achieved higher standards than this. Standards have been consistently above the national average during the last three years. Girls performed better than boys in 1999, in line with the pattern nationally. Boys' assessed standards have declined over the last three years but this was not evident in the work seen in lessons.
199. At the end of Key Stage 4, all students who took GCSE examinations in French or German gained a grade between A* and G, with 67 percent of students gaining grades A*-C in French and 57 per cent gaining grades A*-C in German. These results were above the national average in both languages, and well above in French. They are a significant improvement on results in the previous two years. The GCSE results in French were higher than the overall average for the school in 1999 and lower than the school average in German. Girls performed better than boys overall in German, while boys performed better than girls overall in French. More girls than boys gained grades A*-B in French, and more boys than girls gained grades A*-B in German. Boys performed well above their peers nationally in French; both boys and girls performed broadly in line with their peers nationally in German. There were no A level candidates in either language in 1999. Overall, results have shown a significant upward trend over the last three years.
200. Nearly all students achieve well by the end of Key Stage 3. Performance in modern languages equates to or exceeds the indications given by their levels of attainment on entry to the school. Most students enter the school with little or no prior knowledge of either French or German. Some students have a knowledge of Italian on entry to the school; these students are taught by staff from outside the school and can take GCSE or A level examinations at the school. As the subject is not taught by school staff it was not included in the inspection, but some of the students concerned were invited to express an opinion and some of their written work was seen. This was appropriate and had been thoroughly marked. The students who expressed an opinion were pleased with the progress of their studies.
201. In the lessons and work seen in French and German at Key Stage 3 most students were reaching standards at least in line with, and more often above, national expectations. Students with special educational needs were reaching or exceeding the standards expected.
202. Many students' confidence in speaking French grows throughout Key Stage 3 as they learn and practise vocabulary and everyday expressions. By the end of the key stage they are able to talk in simple sentences about topics such as their likes and dislikes or their homes, friends and families. They can understand quite complex spoken French either on tape or in listening to their teacher. Students beginning German in Year 9 progress well and know a good range of everyday words and expressions by the end of the year. Throughout the key stage most written work is above or well above national expectations. Students present their work well and take care with spelling and grammatical accuracy. They understand printed and written French and German without difficulty. Literacy standards are high.
203. Students of all levels of attainment work hard in lessons, showing enthusiasm for the subject and relating well to each other and to their teachers. In the lessons seen,

they particularly enjoyed giving rapid answers to questions based on flashcards or overhead transparencies or participating in games where they had to supply a correct word quickly in order to gain a point. These games, and other work involving the time or date, aid the development of numeracy as well as literacy by increasing the students' rapid recall of number in their second or third language.

204. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are good. Written work in this key stage is topic based and contains a wider range of vocabulary and grammar, including a greater variety of tenses. Students are prepared for the foundation or higher level of the GCSE according to their aptitude for languages. Their written work is appropriate for the levels concerned; the standards reached by individual students indicate that they are working hard and are well aware of the demands of the examination
205. At the end of Key Stage 4 students can converse well in French and German in the topics prepared for the examination. They are less fluent in wider discussions but their understanding of the languages by this stage is very good. The high standards in understanding and writing further indicate a good level of literacy.
206. In the lessons seen, students showed interest in their work and volunteered answers readily when questioned. In a Year 10 lesson, lower attaining students showed a good grasp of number and were very enthusiastic when joining in a vocabulary exercise about daily routines. Relationships between teachers and students were mutually respectful and friendly in all the lessons seen.
207. At both key stages, students are attaining high standards in the skills of listening, reading and writing. Their speaking skills develop well between Years 7 and 11 but greater confidence in trying out new expressions or more extended sentences would help them to match their spoken fluency to their attainment in other areas of language.
208. Beyond the age of 16, standards are above average. Students in the small German group conversed well on the topic of work and rose in a mature way to the challenge of a mock job interview in German. Students in the larger French group were more hesitant but as they gained in confidence and lost some of their self-consciousness they showed themselves able to converse with some fluency and enjoyed describing themselves and their friends.
209. In both languages, the students' written work reaches a high standard and their ready comprehension indicates good reading and listening skills. Particularly in French, they need to develop greater self-confidence in order to improve their spoken language.
210. Since the last inspection, results in both languages in the GCSE examination have improved significantly. There has been a greater emphasis on written accuracy including the learning of formal grammar. Through discussion and training, teachers have improved their methods of ensuring high standards in the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.
211. In all of the lessons seen, the teaching was at least satisfactory. In the great majority it was good or very good. In over one-third of lessons, it was excellent. Teachers spoke French or German in all lessons, using English for clarification only when necessary. All of the teachers spoke fluently and confidently with very good

accents. They planned their lessons well, making full use of the time available to use a wide variety of tasks. This maintained the students' interest well. Appropriate homework is regularly set and thoroughly marked, with full comments and positive suggestions for improvement in Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13. The teachers work closely together as a team, ensuring that teaching and marking methods are the same for all students.

212. The department's good range of resources, including audio-visual aids, is used skilfully to provide the students with a variety of learning experiences. This enables them to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
213. At present, the department makes no systematic use of information technology. Students would benefit from access to the internet. This would enable them to have contact with their contemporaries in schools abroad.
214. It would assist students' learning if, in lessons where numbers are large, more support could be given in lessons to students with special educational needs, and if language assistants in both French and German could be made available to help GCE Advanced level students with their oral work. It would be beneficial to these students' if daily newspapers in French and German could be provided and the stock of French and German books in the library increased.
215. Students in Key Stage 3 would be helped to improve further by more detailed marking and by the setting of individual targets in the same way as is already in place for Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13.
216. Overall, this is a strong department that makes a significant contribution to the fulfilment of the school's aims and its academic success.

MUSIC

217. Statutory teacher assessment of standards in Music of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 indicates an improving trend. By this measure in 1999, 85 per cent of Year 9 were said to be working at the level expected, or going beyond this, against a national average of 67 per cent. The attainment of boys was below that of girls, but boys still do better than the national average for their age group. Results at GCSE Music are consistently well above the national average for grades A*-C [100 per cent against the national average of 66 per cent] and are also above this for A*-G [100 per cent against 97 per cent]. There is a good balance between genders of those entering and no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys. While numbers choosing music are smaller than in most subjects, the percentage at this school is above the average for all maintained schools. Music results are among the highest of any subject in the school.
218. Standards in work seen during the inspection are broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. The generally high levels of literacy and numeracy when students start at the school provide a good foundation for them to learn to play classroom instruments, to copy musical notation and to write about music heard. Work develops through structured use of keyboards, devising tunes in a methodical way that relates these to chords. For example a Year 9 class was able to play by ear an Elizabethan tune and its ground bass, working in pairs, to copy the notation and to start to work out an alternative tune from the chords given. Achievement would be even better if pupils were able to use computers for

composition and if they were given more chance to improvise in small groups. The absence of schemes of work for this key stage means that other staff, and non-specialists, have no knowledge of the purpose, sequence or grouping of lessons. This places a severe restriction on evaluation and learning.

219. Standards in work seen at Key Stage 4 were above average. Those who choose to study music beyond the age of 14 perform well individually and in small groups, usually with perceptible expression. They can identify aurally features of music new to them, and become emotionally involved with their compositions, expressing pride or dissatisfaction. These students can converse easily about their learning and progress, acknowledging weaknesses and recognising strengths. Many are involved with performing groups both within and beyond school. This provides strong support for their interest and learning. Most have a clear notion of what part music will play in their lives in the future. Achievement for GCSE students would improve further if they were more active participants in taught sessions, and if there were technological resources to support composition.
220. At both key stages, good relationships and a usually calm atmosphere support learning well. Achievement would be further increased by improved facilities and a more stimulating learning environment. The learning of instruments, privately or in school, for which parents pay, plays an important part in the standards achieved, particularly in performance and composition.
221. Some aspects of music have improved since the previous inspection. While standards at GCSE have been maintained, levels obtained in the statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 3. The issue of too much copying out has been addressed and such activity was only seen in the necessary copying of musical notation during this inspection. Examples of freely written prose were seen, notably in self-assessment paragraphs. Links to the programme of study in the National Curriculum are now clearer but there is still no departmental scheme of work. The amount of composition work produced by most students at Key Stage 4 has increased.
222. Other aspects have not improved, or have worsened. Arrangements for assessment of Key Stage 3 students remain unsatisfactory. There is still a dearth of non-European instruments, limiting students' experience of music in other cultures. Accommodation is still cramped, made worse by the neglected smaller spaces and the paucity of display which could support learning. Extra-curricular music groups, although re-started this year after a long gap, do not have the impact reported previously. Provision for computer-aided learning in music has not developed as it should have over the last five years. The teaching strength has been reduced to one full-time music teacher, with two part-time non-specialists teaching some Key Stage 3 classes. Overall improvement is therefore unsatisfactory.
223. The teaching of music overall is satisfactory. At Key Stage 4, teaching and learning are good. The GCSE syllabus is covered evenly and pupils are encouraged to achieve in each aspect. Teaching creates a good atmosphere for learning, both when leading and when enabling. It is sensitive to pupils' increasing maturity as independent learners. Changes in the expectations of examiners are monitored closely and teaching prepares students well for the experience of examination. There are practice runs at the recording of performances and compositions. Trial written responses to listening are made in the time allowed. Teaching and learning would improve with more frequent monitoring of written work, inclusion of notes for

listening, to check understanding and spelling; and by including more discussion in pairs or groups after listening experiences. Learning is restricted for those without facilities at home by the current absence of even one active computer music work station.

224. Teaching and learning is more inconsistent at Key Stage 3, because more teachers are involved and because there are no explicit schemes of work. In the classroom the strengths of teaching include good control and guidance of students, a brisk pace and the setting of achievable tasks, incorporating well those students with special educational needs. Aims are made clear and lessons usually end by reinforcing what has been learned. Teaching by the subject specialist is usually good, instilling important musical practices such as keeping time, neat stave notation and efficient use of keyboards. Teaching by non specialists, where necessary briefing and subject knowledge is in place, is satisfactory but lacks some of those practices. Where such preparation does not take place, teaching is poor, and learning unsatisfactory. Supply teachers must not be asked to attempt lesson content that is beyond their levels of knowledge and skill. The absence of schemes of work clearly exacerbates the problem of using non-specialist and supply staff.
225. Management in music is poor. Documentation is sparse; there is no written development plan, giving priorities, time-spans or budgeting; no policies, for example, for assessment; and there is insufficient guidance to support the contribution of on-specialists. Responsibility for reports to parents of students whose teacher is absent is not taken. Use of accommodation, already cramped, is wasteful, since several smaller spaces are badly neglected; proper maintenance of these spaces could alleviate the cramped conditions, provide space for group work and storage and thereby enhance learning. Display is underused; in classrooms no students' work and too little other stimulating material is mounted; in corridors, the absence of good quality publicity, in space provided, conveys a poorer image of music in school than is actually the case. Extra-curricular work, newly revived, has great potential that, despite some good direction, is not being realised. Instrumental lessons are insufficiently documented to show who is learning what and with what success.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

226. Standards were well above the national average in the 1999 statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3. Eighty-six per cent of students reached the national expectation. Boys and girls reached similar standards. These high standards have been sustained over the last three years. There is currently no examined course at Key Stage 4. In 1999, four students took GCE Advanced level sports studies at a local college. All gained a grade within the range A-E, with one student gaining a grade B.
227. Standards of work seen at the end of Key Stage 3 reflect these assessments and are above average. Students show good levels of skill in games, swimming and gymnastics. Standards in swimming are very good. There are very few non-swimmers and the great majority, including those who have special educational needs, can demonstrate strokes on both back and front. Many perform above expectations by the end of the key stage. Standards in games are good. Basic skills such as serving in badminton are well developed. Students develop a range of serves, knowing how and when to use them within a game. Girls perform at a

higher standard than boys in gymnastics. They show more control. However, all can produce very good imaginative work, particularly in pairs and groups.

228. Standards overall of work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are satisfactory. Standards in games and swimming are good with students showing a good level of skill in life saving, an ability to analyse what they do and a readiness to articulate what they think. The Junior Sports Leader Award encourages Year 11 students to take responsibility for coaching. This develops their ability to analyse in detail the performance of others. Many students perform at a satisfactory standard in basketball, showing an ability to apply systems for defence. Those with special educational needs all show a good level of skill in many of these areas.
229. There have been several improvements since the last inspection. Students are now continuously monitored and are aware of targets that they need to reach. The standards defined within the National Curriculum are posed within the department. This encourages students to then set their own targets.
230. The overall quality of teaching is good with good provision for students who have special educational needs. Some very good lessons were seen during the inspection, including several that were excellent. Planning is very good. It is detailed and productive lessons frequently result. Schemes of work relate carefully to the content and assessment requirements of the National Curriculum. There is a deliberate policy of sharing objectives with students at the outset of lessons. This gives them a sense of purpose and direction. In most lessons the key points are viewed at the end. In the best lessons seen, teaching styles were varied to encourage students to plan and evaluate their work. When this occurs, the students respond extremely well. Two excellent lessons were seen at Key Stage 3 in swimming and health-related exercise. Their success was reflected in the degree to which the students exercised both initiative and imagination. In three very good lessons in gymnastics and games, the pace and clear direction of the lesson enabled the students quickly to acquire new skills and then to refine and improve them. Most lessons proceed with order and purpose. That tone is recognised by the students who themselves arrive promptly, well prepared and with a commitment to take part. Occasionally, there are still some lessons that are too dominated by the teacher or where the content is inappropriate. These frequently result in work that is predictable and pedestrian or beyond the reach of the students. Standards decline in such lessons. In most lessons, students are well managed and in the great majority of instances relationships are pleasant and productive. Teachers' good subject knowledge and skills enable them to demonstrate very well and this provides the students with a good level of challenge.
231. The swimming pool and gymnasium are strong features within current provision although the latter is lost to the department for long periods during public examinations. Overall indoor provision is barely adequate for the size of the school.

OTHER SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM

232. Several additional subjects are taught at Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13 within the humanities department.

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS STUDIES

233. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above the national average, with nearly a third of students attaining A* and A grades, twice the national average, in the 1999 GSCE examinations. The proportion attaining A*-G grades is above the national average with all students gaining a grade. Boys and girls do equally well. There has been a significant upward trend of improvement over the last three years and the subject is now, as a direct result of very good teaching, one of the most successful in the school. Students completing the GCE Advanced level course in 1999 in business studies and economics reached twice the national average for the proportion achieving A-B grades and were above the national figures for A-E grades. Boys performed significantly better than the girls and to a greater degree than nationally. There has been a marked improvement in standards since 1997.
234. Standards in work seen during the inspection are above average at both key stages. Students have a good knowledge of the topics covered and a firm understanding of the technical terms and business concepts. At Key Stage 4, pupils are able to use their theoretical understanding of marketing to do effective and well organised practical surveys, transposing their results into accurate bar graphs and pie charts. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs also made good progress through a well planned sequence of targets, skilful guidance from the teacher and effective classroom help from learning support teachers. Students in Years 12 and 13 have a very good understanding of the concepts and terminology of business. They are developing sharp analytical and evaluative skills, prompted by the challenging teaching and tasks. Many can also articulate their views well and are ready to challenge each other in effective group work. They made very good use of their visit to the Jaguar car factory to illustrate and support their understanding of business and management principles.
235. The quality of teaching is good or better in nearly all lessons and in half is very good. It is never less than satisfactory and strongest in Years 12 and 13 where it is consistently very good. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge, plan lessons well with clear objectives and check that these have been achieved at the end of the lesson. Appropriate materials are used to match the needs of all abilities and high expectations are set. However, these need to be more consistent at Key Stage 4 when some students wander off task. Relationships in lessons are very good and there is good on-going assessment. This high level of teaching quality results in very effective learning and a very good response from the students. In two-thirds of lessons, their attitude towards work was very good. Well-motivated, confident students were able to work things out for themselves and organise how they would do so.

SOCIOLOGY

236. Standards in the GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4 are significantly above the national average. In 1999 grades A* to C were obtained by 71 per cent of pupils, compared with 55 per cent nationally. The pass rate for A* to G was 100 per cent. These results were in line with the average of other subjects in the school. Boys' standards are higher than those of the girls. Grades A* and A were achieved by 6 per cent of students.
237. Standards at GCE Advanced level are in line with the national average. In 1999 the pass rate was 84 per cent and a third of students gained grades A or B. The overall point score was close to the national average but below the average of other subjects in the school. In part this is due to the acceptance of students on to the course with moderate attainment in the GCSE.
238. Standards in work seen at Key Stage 4 are above average. In Year 11 students have a good knowledge of the groups of people who could be classified as poor and perceptive comments during discussion indicate that they have a good grasp of why these people are likely to be locked into unemployment. Year 13 students disentangle ethical issues successfully from sample essays. They have a good grasp of the criteria by which their work will be judged in the final papers and they graded a set of sample essays with satisfactory accuracy.
239. Since the last inspection standards of attainment in the GCSE and at A level have remained consistently above the national average. The standard of teaching is now consistently good and learning is supported by richer and more diverse resources. Systems for assessing and monitoring progress through both courses are more structured and rigorous and students' learning is now supported by individual targets.
240. Teaching was good in all lessons observed. It is characterised by a lively and often humorous style with introductory comments that are often thought-provoking and immediately capture the students' attention. A Year 10 class was drawn into discussions skilfully and contributed constructively a range of views and experiences of stereotyping of attitudes and roles within families. From this they developed a good understanding of the how and why roles and attitudes are changing. In all lessons the pace is well sustained and the teachers command of the subject is evident. Year 12 students were highly motivated by an exploration of the right wing shift in politics during the 1980's and their spontaneous discussion of the tension between the responsibility of the individual and those of the state displayed a very good grasp of the issues.