

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SANDHURST SCHOOL**

Sandhurst, Berkshire

LEA area: Bracknell Forest

Unique reference number: 110068

Headteacher: Mr A P Fletcher

Reporting inspector: Susan Chamberlain  
7661

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 January 2000

Inspection number: 186001

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18 Years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Owlsmoor Road  
Owlsmoor  
Sandhurst  
Berkshire

Postcode: GU47 0SD

Telephone number: 01344 775678

Fax number: 01344 771575

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Jan Edwards

Date of previous inspection: 19 September 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Susan Chamberlain	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			What should the school do to improve further?
			How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements
			How well are students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
David Ashby	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Students' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its students?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Dennis Maxwell	Team inspector	Mathematics	Key indicators
Geoffrey Binks	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
		Drama	
Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Mark Gill	Team inspector	Geography	
Mary Harrison	Team inspector	Art	
		Special educational needs	
Paul Hartwright	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information technology	
John Mallinson	Team inspector	History	
Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education	
		English as an additional language	
Colin Robertson	Team inspector	Science	
		Sixth Form	
Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	
		Equal opportunities	
Michael Thomas	Team inspector	Music	

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London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Sandhurst is a mixed comprehensive for students in the 11 - 18 range and has 987 students on roll; this includes a number of service children and those from the local travellers' population. The school is a focal point in the community. The number of students (56) eligible for free meals (6 per cent) is low when compared with other schools. This figure does not take account of the amount of turbulence the school encounters when service children and children of traveller families move in and out of the area, many of whom do not claim their entitlement. The proportion of students with special educational needs (16.7 per cent) is broadly in line with the national average. There are very few students from ethnic minority backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language and none who need support. Students enter the school with levels of attainment around the national average.

Sandhurst School is a good school with many very good or excellent features. The very good leadership, combined with good teaching, very positive attitudes amongst students and examination results that indicate progress when balanced against an average expenditure per student, produces a school that gives good value for money.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

#### **What the school does well**

- The leadership and management of the headteacher, deputy and other key staff are very good and are strongly supported by an excellent governing body.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Students' attitudes, attendance, personal development and behaviour are very good.
- The school cares for its students very well.
- It has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance and good behaviour.
- Provision for students' moral and social development is very good.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching are very good.
- There are very effective links with parents. Parents are very involved in the work of the school and contribute well to their children's learning.

#### **What could be improved**

- The balance of time allocations for all subjects on the curriculum prevents full coverage of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form; it also prevents full coverage of the Programme of Study in information and communication technology. There is too little time devoted to all A-level courses.
- The structure and number of opportunities for:
  - numeracy across the curriculum
  - spiritual development
  - accurate assessment of students' attainment in information and communication technology(I.C.T)
  - study skills in the sixth form.
- The quality of provision of music in Key Stage 3.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has achieved a good level of improvement and it has tackled the issues identified in the last inspection report. Improvements include extending the range of teaching strategies, ensuring consistency within and between departments in applying school policies and developing the co-ordination of provision for students with special educational needs. Success has been demonstrated by a significant improvement in teaching in this inspection and an overall improvement in external examination results. There has been good improvement in art and in design and technology. In information and communication technology there has been patchy improvement, though in this case there is room for further improvement. Problems in satisfying National Curriculum requirements in Key Stage 3 in music persist. Also the school has made progress in improving its environment; in implementing procedures to improve attendance; in providing valuable professional development for teachers new to the school; and in improving communications between students, staff and parents.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3	B	C	B	C
GCSE examinations	A	B	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	E	

**Key**

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

Overall the school achieves above the national average in Key Stage 3 statutory tests. In 1999 results in mathematics and science are higher than those in English. When account is taken of the mobility factor in the school (travellers' and service children) the school compares satisfactorily with similar schools. When considering prior attainment, results at GCSE/GNVQ indicate students' time in school is beneficial and they make at least satisfactory progress. Results at GCSE are rising. For those students who stayed in school from Year 7 to Year 11 the proportion who gained 5A\*-C in 1999 was 61 per cent. School targets are realistic and require a rise of approximately five per cent at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. GCE A-level point scores are well below the national average; they reflect the profile of the students the school recruits with the exception of a few high attainers. The school loses a number of students to a local sixth form college. At all key stages students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students enjoy school and have very good attitudes to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good; students are positive and courteous both inside and outside the classroom.
Personal development and relationships	These are very good and are supported by a caring staff and strong personal and social education programme.
Attendance	Attendance is very good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	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.*

Teaching is good overall. In 98 per cent of lessons seen it was at least satisfactory; in 67 per cent it was good or better and in 16 per cent it was very good or excellent. In only 2 per cent of lessons teaching was unsatisfactory. All teachers have a good understanding of their subjects and plan effectively. They use a variety of methods and assess work conscientiously but there is insufficient sparkle in some lessons. Teachers' knowledge and use of information and communication technology (I.C.T) is very variable. At Key Stage 3 teaching in English, art and religious education was graded highest; grades were lowest in I.C.T, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. At Key Stage 4 it was graded highest in art and religious education and lowest in I.C.T and physical education; in the sixth form, grades were



highest in religious education and lowest in I.C.T and geography. The quality of learning is good. Students make gains in all subjects except in I.C.T where learning is too patchy. Literacy skills are satisfactory. Numeracy skills are satisfactory overall but they receive insufficient direct emphasis by teachers in all subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a broad curriculum including drama at Key Stage 3. However, it does not meet statutory requirements for religious education in Key Stage 4 or in the 6 <sup>th</sup> form. There are weaknesses in music and I.C.T at Key Stage 3.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Provision for special educational needs is satisfactory and is improving.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The very small number of students to whom this applies are fluent in English and do not require additional support.
Provision for students' personal (including spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development	Students' moral and social development are provided for very well; cultural development is good but there are insufficient opportunities for students' spiritual growth.
How well the school cares for its students	The school cares for its students very well and has excellent procedures for monitoring attendance and behaviour.

The school has very good links with parents and these support the care it offers its students.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is a well ordered organisation; it is well led by a very effective headteacher, deputy and other key staff, who monitor and evaluate teaching very effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body gives excellent support and fulfils its responsibility very conscientiously.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is confident that the changes made since the last inspection are enabling good improvement and expects this to be sustained.
The strategic use of resources	The school is careful in its use of resources. Financial management is excellent.

The headteacher and senior management team, exceptionally well supported by the governing body, have a clear vision that is set out in the School Improvement Plan; its implementation is raising the ethos of the school and the overall effectiveness of teaching. The school has a good match of teaching and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most children like school.</li> <li>• Children make progress at the school.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• It is easy to approach the school about problems.</li> <li>• The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• The school is helping children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school does not provide enough musical activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views the parents hold and partially agree with their negative view. The school could provide more musical opportunities outside of lessons but recognises that those that occur are of a high standard. At the parents' meeting all felt that the atmosphere in school was good and inspectors endorse this view. Some concern was expressed about open access to the school site.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Students enter the school with a prior attainment in line with national averages when taking into account their scores in cognitive ability tests, NFER tests and statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 2. Results for the current Year 7 were higher than usual in Key Stage 2 tests but average in every other way.
2. Overall in 1999, students' results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, were above the national average in comparison with all schools in English, mathematics and science, although when considered individually they were average in English. In English and science the percentage of students reaching Level 6 was above average; in mathematics the percentage was well above average. During the inspection work of an equally high standard was seen in the work of more able students in art, history, design and technology and physical education. Most average attaining students were achieving average National Curriculum levels in English, mathematics and science.
3. Students achieve high standards in public examinations at the age of 16. In 1999 the school's GCSE results of 52.7 per cent of students gaining 5 or more A\* - C grades were above the national average (46.3) and have been for the last 3 years (1997-1999). Similarly, the proportion of students gaining 5 A\* - G grades (91.3 per cent) was close to the national average and has been for the 3 years 1997 - 1999. In comparison with similar schools GCSE results are below the national average for 5 A\* - C and well below for 5 A\* - G grades. The trend over the last four years has been lower than the national trend. These data do not take into account the mobility of a considerable number of children of staff from the local military academy and a large number of children from travelling families. Inspectors judge that these factors should be recognised and that a more realistic benchmark is a comparison with schools that have an average proportion of students with free school meals. Of those students who stay at Sandhurst from Year 7 to Year 11 the proportion who gain 5 A\* - C is approximately two, thirds which is considerably above the national average. Over the last three years, girls and boys achieved similarly. The prior attainment of students on entry to the school indicates that students perform better in GCSE examinations than could be expected
4. Students' attainment in the sixth form presents a mixed picture. Whilst the average points score per student is well below the national average, most students achieve to their potential. Some students who stay are very able and they, generally, do very well but the school loses a number of students to a local college and the profile of many of those who stay is one of lower attainment at age 16. The school allows students to take A-level with a low entry requirement to aid recruitment. Although the low points score might indicate that this is unwise, the school does not fail these students and most obtain a place at university. GNVQ courses are working well; students have the opportunity to study advanced level and results are above average. Sixth-form results do not compare well with similar schools. However students' needs are well served as a result of working with teachers they know; in spite of some entering the sixth form with modest GCSE results, most students achieve their potential and move on to higher education.
5. In 1999 English standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are close to the national average for those gaining Level 5 or above and above the national average for Level 6 and above. These results are below those achieved in mathematics and science. Girls outperform boys as they do nationally. Over the three years (1997 - 1999) there is an upward trend, which is similar to the national trend. Although results do not appear to compare well with those of similar schools, they do not take into account the movement of many students both into and out of the locality; however, test results in English could be higher. At the end of Key Stage 4 GCSE results are above the national average in English and well above in literature. Overall grades in English are better than in other school subjects and markedly so in English literature. At A-level all students gain grades A - E. Results are below national levels for grades A and B and this should be a focus for improvement.
6. The school has made improving literacy a specific target. Reading skills and speaking and listening skills in lessons are better than those of writing. All students near the end of Key Stage 3 read well for their ages. Speaking and listening skills develop well because teachers regularly organise group

and paired activities in lessons which require all students to think, to question, to discuss and to respond to the whole class on issues. An interesting example was seen when Year 7 students worked in groups to decide how to write a persuasive letter. Students' writing varies in quantity, accuracy and clarity of expression across the teaching groups and subjects. In higher attaining groups it is above the national average while in the lower attaining groups it is well below this. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in about the same proportion as is found nationally.

7. In mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of students reaching Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above in the national tests for 1999 was above the national average for all schools and has been for the last four years. In comparison with schools of a similar context, students' performance was close to the average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Since the last inspection standards have improved. In 1999 the proportion of students obtaining GCSE grades A\* - C for mathematics was above the national average for all schools. The average point score has been consistent over the past three years. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. In the 1999 examinations, virtually all students obtained grades A\* - G, which is above the national figure for all schools, and shows a slight increase over the past three years. The percentage of students gaining grades A to E in the GCE A-level mathematics examinations was close to the national average in 1999 and was similar for the past three years, showing a steady trend.
8. Students' numeracy skills are applied across the mathematics curriculum and used appropriately across the whole curriculum, for example in science and geography. Numeracy skills are satisfactory overall at both Key Stages 3 and 4 but could be better, given students' prior attainment. Numeracy receives insufficient direct emphasis by teachers. By Year 9 most students can use the four rules of number, although for lower attaining students understanding is insecure. Higher attaining students have a good understanding of numerical relationships. Students with average attainment use number confidently, although they are frequently inaccurate with specific calculations.
9. At the end of Key Stage 3, science results for 1999 statutory tests were above the national average for Level 5 and above, and in line with those of similar schools. Boys out-performed girls but all students make good progress. Over the last three years results have improved from average in 1997 to above in 1998 and 1999. At the end of Key Stage 4 results, although in line in 1997 and 1998, in 1999 exceeded national averages by a small but significant margin. At A-level attainment is lower than the national average in biology but broadly in line for physics and chemistry. There are fewer higher grades than nationally, reflecting recruitment to the sixth form, but very few students fail to gain a pass grade. Overall standards in work seen are satisfactory; students progress well at Key Stage 3 and satisfactorily at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
10. Standards of attainment in Key Stage 3 and in public examinations groups in Key Stage 4 and 5 in religious education are above average. However, there are very large numbers of students in Key Stage 4 and 5 who do not receive their statutory curriculum, as determined by the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
11. Standards across all subjects in Key Stage 3 were found to be at least satisfactory except in information and communication technology and music. Attainment is below national expectations in ICT. The inconsistent way it is taught across the curriculum results in students not covering the Programme of Study in sufficient depth. Assessments are not necessarily accurate and students' progress is unsatisfactory. In music students' attainment is lower than expected, their performing skills being particularly weak. They make inadequate progress. In work seen in history, art, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education standards are above average and progress is good.
12. At Key Stage 4 students in all subjects reached at least satisfactory standards in the work seen. Achievements in history, design and technology and music were above average. In history lessons, students showed good skills when researching a project about the Tower of London and, more generally, communicated well in their writing; they used photos and diagrams to illustrate their conclusions. However, progress could be even higher if students had opportunities to link the facts they record to reasons and consequences. In music students showed good understanding of harmony and were able to write balanced melodies which incorporated some very imaginative ideas.

13. In the sixth form standards are above average in art when students show maturity and creativity and in music where they are competent with the musical aspects of information and communication technology. They are equally high in modern foreign languages where they are confident speakers and in religious education where they are skilful at expressing opinions from more than one point of view. Standards are lower in geography where students have limited background knowledge and study skills and in history where they fail to explain how and why events occurred.
14. Of the five students for whom English is an additional language only one was found to have a need for support. This pupil has since progressed so rapidly, with the help of an LEA language team, that support has been withdrawn as it is no longer needed. The other four students, although English is not their first language at home, are fluent and competent in the English language.
15. The school is careful when setting targets; those for 2000 are sufficiently ambitious to present both staff and students with reasonable challenge yet still be realistic. The governing body has ratified targets for Key Stage 3 and GCSE of approximately five per cent above those gained in 1999. These are likely to prove difficult to achieve given the number of students who leave and enter the school from service and traveller families. However, the improved ethos for learning has been brought about by a relatively new senior management team who are prepared to work hard to accelerate the rate of students' progress across the school.
16. Students with special educational needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. The school uses assessment data and test results appropriately to set targets for students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). They reassess students if concerns arise, for example, in Year 8 where they have used extra teaching time to address concerns in literacy. However, whilst most subjects set subject specific targets, these are not always developed fully and are not always specific enough. Occasionally, students with SEN make good progress, for example, in art in Year 7.
17. Students with statements make good progress. For example, in Year 11 science, they make significant gains when working on 'How we get day and night on Earth'. Targets are specific and achievement is recorded. In Year 10 GNVQ students working on 'danger in the home' are supported well by a learning support assistant (LSA). This has a positive effect on their progress in identifying danger areas for young children. They understand the safety measures that need to be put into place.
18. Students' particular needs are appropriately provided for. Most able students make good progress overall. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4. They are identified through assessment data, test results and teacher recognition. Provision is appropriate; for example, the history department organises revision groups for them every fortnight.

### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

19. Students' attitudes, values and personal development are very good. They make a significant contribution to the work of the school and the positive atmosphere that permeates the whole school. In 98 per cent of lessons the attitudes, response and behaviour ranges from satisfactory to excellent. In 2 per cent of lessons, where the teachers were not fully secure in the management of behaviour or the lessons were not challenging, some students showed less good behaviour or in a minority of lessons unsatisfactory behaviour.
20. Students' attitudes to the school are very good. They have established very good relationships with staff, which is supported by very good links with parents. Students are very good at co-operating with each other and with staff and this results in them valuing each other's work or contribution to the lessons. A really good example of this was seen in a Year 7 personal and social education lesson when groups of students were presenting their findings to the whole class and they had ensured all of the team members had some input into the presentation. In one group, however, one girl, in a very sensitive way, took the arm of one of the boys who was unsure of what to do and led him to the correct place and encouraged him to make his contribution. This was clearly appreciated by the boy and the whole class clapped the contribution of the team. This very good attitude is reflected in many areas where students value and take pride in their own work and the work of other students.

21. The very high standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school have a very positive impact on students' work and concentration. The high expectations of the school for behaviour are clearly supported by students and, when necessary, by parents. The result is a calm positive climate for learning with no evidence of aggressive or racist behaviour. Misbehaviour is rare and when it occurs it is dealt with promptly and effectively. It does not disrupt learning. Exclusions occur for those students who persistently find it difficult to adjust to the rigours of being in school and these have been quite numerous. They are only carried out when there is no alternative and when other strategies have not encouraged an appropriate change of behaviour.
22. Students have very good opportunities for personal development and they engage in these with enthusiasm and confidence. They are active in taking responsibility through the students' council, reception support, prefects' duties and for organising their work and other school activities. Overall they develop very good individual study skills through use of the library and computer facilities where they study without supervision. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are included as part of a community that copes confidently with their daily work and play. Many are involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These range from public speaking, theatre performance, sport and games, visits to theatres and places of interest that support their studies, such as 'national chef', and science project challenges with productive links to many different business organisations. Local work-experience for students in Year 10 and for project work in GNVQ subjects adds further very good opportunities for personal development. Students show a significant sense of pride in their achievements and their school. The school helps to celebrate this with the publication of the newsletters, news reviews and annual presentation evening.
23. Attendance is above national levels. Students clearly like coming to school and this has a very positive impact on their opportunities for achieving success. They are punctual to school and between lessons, which start on time.

#### **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

24. Teaching is good overall. In 98 per cent of lessons teaching was at least satisfactory; in 67 per cent it was good or better and in 16 per cent it was very good or excellent. In 2 per cent of lessons teaching was unsatisfactory. Sixth form teaching was marginally better than that in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
25. At Key Stage 3 teaching in English, art and religious education was graded highest; grades were lowest in information and communication technology, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. At Key Stage 4 it was graded highest in art and religious education and lowest in information and communication technology and physical education; in the sixth form grades were highest in religious education and lowest in information and communication technology and geography.
26. The quality of learning is good. Students make gains in all subjects except in information and communication technology where learning is too patchy to help students to acquire, consolidate and develop the skills they need.
27. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects overall. In art they exhibit exceptional expertise when they help students to learn by developing a progressive build-up of skills, which is supported by good advice and discussion with individual students and whole groups. Art teachers are quick to recognise weaknesses of low attainers; they skilfully re-direct interest to, for example, batik whilst helping them learn independently. Teachers of media studies have an excellent understanding of their subject, which they support by using a wide range of activities, including the use of information and communication technology. The teachers of mathematics, technology, science and GNVQ have a good skills-base that allows them to use information and communication technology effectively to promote learning. In physical education, art, food technology, history and religious education teachers' skills in information and communication technology are less secure. Students respond well to their teachers and progress is at least satisfactory.
28. In modern foreign languages teachers use their good knowledge to inform and improve learning but non-specialists have insufficiently developed understanding. Although they cope with classes in Year 7, they offer insufficient challenge for more able students. These teachers, for example, do not

expect students to use their newly acquired language when performing day-to-day class routines. However, teachers usually have high expectations. In drama, for example, an ambitious, well-planned lesson linked drama skills to the introduction of Shakespeare's language. Students used movement, speech and statues in an approach to understanding Act 1 Scene 1 of Romeo and Juliet. They gained considerably; they not only learned the necessary skills but became absorbed by the intensity and emotion involved in their task.

29. Teachers' planning of lessons and units of work is generally good. It is particularly clear in geography at all key stages and in modern foreign languages in the sixth form. Students are normally clear about what they need to do next.
30. Teachers use a variety of strategies effectively to promote students' learning but there is insufficient sparkle in some lessons. In a religious education Key Stage 3 lesson students made considerable gains when considering human rights. The teacher motivated in-depth discussion well; the religious element, however, was not prominent. In a physical education lesson, a video was successfully used to introduce a lesson, a resource also used in a GNVQ lesson in Year 10 where students were shown mock interviews and the practice of good and bad techniques. Some students were able to present their reasons why they would choose a particular career and could say where it might lead and what they would need to achieve to follow that path; the quality of learning was high. In science teaching varies from those who are lively and confident to those who are recently appointed newcomers. In some science lessons it was clear that teachers had the ability to communicate enthusiasm whilst others missed opportunities to elicit ideas. In history teachers make good use of external visits but do not use the library or information and communication technology for research sufficiently. In the resistant materials area of design and technology, project work had inadequate emphasis on the design process.
31. Students are particularly well managed and in Year 10 mathematics, for example, a teacher used a good style, which was supported by good relationships; these underpin the whole school behaviour ethos. In history lessons relationships are universally excellent, although they are not utilised when promoting discussion. The combination of very good classroom management and positive relationships provides an environment where students can reach their potential.
32. Time and most resources are used effectively but information and communication technology is only used effectively by a minority of teachers and its use is not well planned into a full range of subjects.
33. Teachers' use of assessment varies but is generally good. Some marking is inadequate and does not help students improve. Assessment is very good in history where it is used well to inform teaching; history work is marked very thoroughly with many analytical comments, particularly in the sixth form. Students understand where they are in relation to GCSE courses but have little self-knowledge of their National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3. Homework is used effectively in all but information and communication technology and physical education (Key Stage 3). Parents felt that homework was variable, sometimes too much and sometimes many topics together, but they generally sign student planners. Students make good use of their planners, which provide a link between home and school.
34. Students enjoy most of their lessons. Where the pace is slow, as in design and technology when students were asked to create designs by sketching, they make less progress than they might. Interest levels are normally high and particularly so in mathematics and history in Years 7 – 11 and in modern foreign languages and music in the sixth form.
35. Provision for special educational needs is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Additional support for students with SEN is good overall in Key Stages 3 and 4, when provided in classrooms. Support is also good when students from these key stages are withdrawn from lessons for additional behavioural support on a one-to-one basis. For example, in Year 7, students learn to organise themselves and their work. Support given by the learning support assistants (LSAs) is usually effective, for example in Year 11 mathematics, when working on algebra. However, occasionally teachers do not brief the LSAs adequately prior to lessons. Opportunities are also missed on one or two occasions for students to work in small groups, because the assistant sits passively with the students whilst the teacher is talking. Assistants usually take care to ensure that students become independent in their lessons whenever possible.

36. Each subject department has a special education needs (SEN) representative who liaises closely with the SEN manager. All students' Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) are in place. Each department adds subject-specific targets to the IEPs. However, the SEN manager has rightly identified that this final process is not fully developed, as all subject-specific targets are not focused tightly enough. Several departments have already put them into place and use them appropriately. Teachers have clear guidelines on how to plan lessons to cope with all students' needs. More training is planned to improve teachers' skills in this area.
37. Teachers are aware of the needs of more able students. They give their time willingly, for example, in history when providing extra revision sessions. In art, teachers provide extra-curricular activities during the lunch hours and after school when students can extend their skills. They encourage students to reach their full potential through individual creative studies, which allow them to follow their individual talents to high levels. Most students respond positively to the responsibility of independent work. Teachers use assessment procedures appropriately to plan further work for talented students. All departmental representatives meet with the special educational needs manager to discuss the needs, progress and learning of the students in order to improve provision. The school uses sources in the community to support these students, for example, when arranging appropriate placements for work experience. However, there are occasions when these students are not sufficiently challenged, for example in music, although students learning instruments achieve higher standards than students who do not. There are self-assessment procedures within departments, which aid improvement for the more able.

### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?**

38. The school provides a broad curriculum for all its students with a full 25 hours of teaching for students of compulsory school age. At Key Stage 3 students are taught the full range of National Curriculum subjects, as well as religious education, personal and social education and drama. Within this wide framework, however, there are some weaknesses. The curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT) is intended to be taught through the other subjects and does not have special time allocated. At the moment this is unsatisfactory as there is no overall structure for ICT in place in Years 7, 8 and 9 to guarantee that the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are being taught to all students. This is evident, for example, in science where opportunities to use ICT are very limited and restrict the curriculum. Within the taught curriculum there are also weaknesses in music. Schemes of work are not in place and National Curriculum requirements for teaching the use of notation and music of different times and places are not met.
39. In other areas, however, there are strong features. Drama for all students across the Key Stage is a successful and popular course which supports students oral skills in English and which contributes strongly to extra-curricular activities. Its inclusion at Key Stage 3 is a valuable foundation for the similarly successful GCSE course. Judicious timetabling allows a second modern foreign language, German, to be introduced for some students in Years 8 and 9. Again this provides a valuable opportunity to prepare students for a GCSE course in Key Stage 4, although at the moment few do this. . The personal and social education programme is a successful link with the school's pastoral base. Provision for students with special educational needs has improved since the last inspection.
40. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 broadens considerably to include a wide spread of optional courses, including GNVQ courses. In addition to the eleven optional choices, based on GCSE courses, there are three Part 1 GNVQ courses available in business studies, leisure and tourism, and health and social care. The GNVQ programme is well organised and provides outward looking courses which lead to visits to different workplaces and centres. It provides opportunities for students to plan and organise events for themselves. The only curricular drawback for some students in Year 11 is that the length of the time for the GNVQ course reduces some students' English allocation from three hours to two hours per week, which is insufficient to cover both GCSE English and English Literature. The personal and social education course including work on religious education continues for all students but religious education becomes an optional GCSE course. This means that for most students the time allocated to religious education, about 6 teaching hours per year, is insufficient to cover the requirements of the Berkshire Agreed Syllabus, which requires 40 hours per annum.

41. The curricular provision in the sixth form consists mainly of GCE A-level courses in a wide range of subjects, as well as GNVQ courses in business studies and leisure and tourism and retake GCSE courses in English and mathematics. The school attempts to provide A-level courses for which there is sufficient demand. At the moment theatre studies, media studies, economics and psychology are successfully offered in addition to national curriculum subjects. For Year 12 students there are, in addition, a general studies and an ICT component for one hour per week. The time allowed for A-level subjects is very limited. This is disadvantageous for most students.
42. The school offers a strong programme of extra-curricular activities, most of which are well subscribed. For example, in the inspection week 150 students indicated their wish to audition for parts in the Easter drama production of "Gregory's Girl". The school has a long history of successful productions in past years including four large-scale drama/musical performances in the last two years. These are well supported by many teachers as well as by students and parents. Often performances are given to primary school children at the school or at other centres. A wide range of sporting activities is provided after school and team games are well supported. Many students have achieved individual and team success in recent years. Teaching staff give generously of their time to run extra-curricular events. During the inspection week a large group of English and drama students attended the National Theatre performance of 'An Inspector Calls' in London.
43. The school enjoys very strong links with its contributing primary schools: regular meetings take place to discuss transfer and the curriculum. Successful links are established with Reading University for the placement of teachers in training. This has in the past been a useful source of teacher recruitment.
44. Provision for the personal and social education of students is good. The course is broad and balanced and topics studied are well matched to the age and understanding of students. The standard of teaching is good overall and in no lesson observed was it less than satisfactory. Sensitive issues, for example sex education, are taught by teachers with appropriate experience; all others are taught by form tutors. The courses are well coordinated and supported by a good range of resources. Monitoring is satisfactory overall. Procedures for the review and development of the schemes of work are effective. Planning is done well in advance to aid teachers to prepare and some workshops to widen tutors' knowledge and understanding are provided when necessary, for example in drugs education.
45. Careers and work related opportunities are good. Students receive tasters of the world of work in Years 7 and 8. Arrangements for supporting students make rational option choices for learning in Key Stage 4 are well structured and supporting documentation is detailed and clear. All students participate in a well-organised work experience programme at the end of Year 10 but they have only limited opportunities to reflect and learn from each other's work experiences. Learning is supported by a good range of accessible and well-organised resources in a large careers library.
46. The arrangements made for students' spiritual development are unsatisfactory. Isolated focuses on spirituality occur in lessons, for example, in a sensitive discussion on the topic of death in PSE and a discussion of the spiritual quality of a ceramic head and a plaster model figure in art lessons. In most subject areas, including religious education, there is insufficient focus on spirituality. In religious education, students learn about religions but opportunities to learn from religions, through reflection and meditation, are often missed. The school is not meeting statutory requirements for collective worship. Students attend one house or year group assembly each week. Plans for assemblies address moral and social issues well within the 'Thought for the Week' but do not focus sufficiently on spirituality, for example, by considering religious festivals. Assemblies make a powerful contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development, such as a Year 10 assembly that considered the plight of people in Kenya, but their contribution to students' spiritual development is limited. Few tutor periods include a spiritual element.
47. Provision for students' moral development is very good. A highly structured and well balanced PSE programme gives good opportunities for discussion of moral issues, such as a Year 11 debate where students openly and confidently discussed the issues of being part of a single parent family. Moral issues are also considered in other subject areas, such as English and drama, for example, a study of justice and responsibility based on 'An Inspector Calls' and, in history, the slavery role of women in the nineteenth century.



48. The school behaviour policy documents detail highly structured processes. These promote strong moral codes and are implemented consistently. Staff, students and parents are very well informed and this is reflected in the way the whole school operates smoothly. Honesty and fairness are promoted well in lessons; for example, importance is given to 'fair play' and playing to the rules in physical education.
49. There is a lack of consistency in the use of registration time. At best, it is used well, such as in Year 7 where students were writing letters to their form tutor who had been injured in an accident. Occasionally, either the level of pupil involvement in discussion of thought for the week is weak or time is not used purposefully to promote students' moral, social and personal development.
50. The arrangements for promoting students' social development are very good. Relationships amongst students and between students and staff are very good. Students work productively together in groups and are supportive of one another. The school's drama productions make a significant contribution to students' social development. Very good opportunities are provided for students to accept responsibility. These range from students having to take responsibility for planning their own projects and becoming more independent in their study, as in art, to students taking turn in 'office duty' and students acting as prefects and captains. The house forums that inform the School Council are chaired by sixth-formers. In these, students from across the age range share views sensibly. The school encourages involvement in charity work and significant sums of money are raised each year for a number of charities. In 1998/99, the total amount raised was in excess of £4,000 and a further £3,000 was raised for the School Environmental Fund.
51. Provision for students' cultural development is good. A large number of visits are organised each year to support curriculum work. The diverse range of activities includes Year 9 students taking part in a wheelchair basketball competition as part of a religious education course exploring the problems experienced by the disabled in society and A-level physics students who visited Exeter University to experience higher education. Foreign trips occur but these are not extensive. They have included GNVQ students visiting Futuroscope in France as part of their course and a five-day trip to the Rhineland. Teachers tackle cultural issues in the curriculum where opportunities arise; for example, consideration of Ancient Egypt in mathematics. The school also encourages students from other cultures and those that have visited foreign countries to share their experiences, for example a student from South Africa has spoken about apartheid. Special events, such as the 'India Day' foster multi-cultural awareness but preparation of students for life in a multi-cultural society is not an integral part of the life of the school.
52. Arrangements for promoting students' moral, social and cultural development have improved since the previous inspection. Provision for students' spiritual development remains limited. Religious education makes less of a contribution than previously, with an insufficient focus on spirituality in its teaching; there is not sufficient time in Key Stage 4 to cover the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Arrangements for collective worship still do not meet statutory requirements.
53. As there is very little withdrawal from lessons, students with special educational needs are supported mainly in the classroom. They have a broad and balanced curriculum. For the very small number of students (2) who are disapplied for one subject there is one-to-one support work with the special educational needs manager and the opportunity to have trial sessions in the subjects that they find very difficult. All students have equal access to the curricular and extra-curricular activities. Counselling is available to students. The pastoral system gives strong support to personal, social and health education. There is good liaison with outside agencies and medical problems are handled appropriately. The school has regard for the Code of Practice. Statements and IEPs are in place, although not all subject targets are specific enough. Annual reviews take place appropriately. Parents attend these reviews and have the opportunity to contribute to them. Outside agencies complete reports as necessary.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

54. The care the school provides for all students is a significant strength of the school, which permeates all of the work of the school. The school has a very comprehensive set of assessment procedures supported by clear and manageable documentation. The quality and extent of the use of assessment across departments is variable but is overall sound.

55. The school has established a significant ethos of pastoral care that is clearly understood by students and acknowledged and supported by parents. The care permeates all aspects of the schools work and embraces the needs of all staff, pupils, parents and governors. Appropriate local agencies are effectively consulted when there are needs. Health and safety is well managed and regularly reviewed. Child protection is an established practice in the school for all staff and is well managed.
56. Promotion and monitoring of behaviour are excellent and ensure staff, students and parents are very clear about the school's expectations. This underpins the caring atmosphere the school community enjoys and ensures aggressive or racist behaviour are unlikely to occur. The school has very good strategies for dealing with any issues should they occur. Promotion and monitoring of attendance is excellent through highly effective school systems. Students and parents are equally clear about what the school expects for attendance, punctuality, authorisation of absence and truancy. The highly effective monitoring arrangements ensure the school can react to any issue very quickly which it does, particularly for truancy from lessons. The excellent co-operation and work of the Educational Welfare Officer is a significant support to the school, in particular in supporting students with work which the school provides for students who are unable to attend school or for those excluded to complete at home.
57. The school's assessment policies and procedures have undergone a major review and improvement since the previous inspection. They are now very good. The senior staff have assembled a comprehensive and thorough system that demonstrates their good understanding for assessing and recording each pupil's attainment and progress at significant points during the school year. The results of internally administered tests are combined with subject assessments to provide a good basis for monitoring progress and making career decisions, such as subject choices for GCSE and the sixth form. The assessments contribute much of the evidence for the annual reports to parents, which are generally well written and meet statutory requirements. The well-prepared action plan for assessment, monitoring, recording and reporting supports the effective management of procedures. The governing body has ratified challenging targets for end of Key Stage 3 and 4 results in Summer 2001 by using the aggregated forecasts of individual students.
58. At the level of subject departments there are inconsistencies in assessment procedures. Several departments make good and effective use of test results. For example, the mathematics and geography departments consider carefully the results and progress of each pupil in relation to the expectations of the curriculum. There are moderated portfolios of students' work to support teacher assessments. The year tutors meet the Heads of House to discuss students' progress, conduct and any important considerations just prior to sending out interim reports, in a way that shows good professional discussion and concern. The information gained through monitoring progress is used constructively by most departments to set suitable targets for GCSE entries. However, students' work is not marked consistently and in music, for example, no evidence is available to support Key Stage 3 teacher assessments. While some marking identifies attainment and effort clearly, there are too many examples where work receives an overall tick, or a brief note of praise. While many teachers provide guidance and oral comments in lessons, there is insufficient written communication between teachers and students which makes explicit what they know in relation to their targets and where to concentrate further effort.
59. There are good indications that the school is beginning to include the students in self-evaluation and there is established effective practice in a few subjects. However, many of the statements are organisational, such as 'I worked well in my group' or 'I have used quotations', and there are few indications of the attainment skills achieved that match the good example used by geography teachers. There are helpful guides for parents to ease the task of interpreting reports, showing good attention to the school/ parent partnership, and a reply form to encourage dialogue.
60. The care and provision of appropriate facilities for students with special educational needs well documented. Statutory documented statements are well organised and meet requirements. Various appropriate agencies and specialists are consulted and used to process reviews. General targets are clear but specific subject based targets are less clear.
61. The standards of care of the premises and grounds are very good. Staff work hard to maintain a clean attractive environment, which adds positively to the welcoming atmosphere of the whole school. Parents, students and staff have contributed a lot of hard work to decorate the school, to make attractive garden areas and to help upgrade areas such as the food technology area so that

they now are very attractive features of the school. Some areas such as the toilets are a focus for further improvements for which students have identified a concern.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

62. The school has excellent links with parents through the very good information communicated to them and through the very close links established by staff. Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning and are very supportive to the school.
63. Parents indicate that this is a good school both in response to the OFSTED questionnaire and at the parents' meeting. They have a strong commitment to the school through the support they provide as governors, high levels of attendance at school meetings, support of school activities, parent-teacher association fund-raising and the keen interest they take in supporting the school with its improvements in care, academic achievement and its position in the community.
64. The effectiveness of links with parents is excellent. There are well-established links between staff and parents, which reassures parents that the school is open and welcoming. It enables staff to know and understand all students and their families and for students to recognise this close consultative process. The impact of parents involvement is very good. They support school initiatives for high levels of attendance and punctuality. They respond positively to commitments to work with the school to maintain high standards of behaviour and the home-school agreement. They encourage students to complete their homework and their journal diary planners. They show, through their involvement in attending school to review their children's work or option or careers meetings, that they have a very high level of interest in the work of the school and how their children can succeed. Parents of special educational needs students are clearly involved in the review process.
65. The quality of information provided by the school is very good. There is a high quality and quantity of information that informs parents and students about all aspects of the school's work and the achievements of the students. The school brochure, newsletters and news reviews are good examples of this. The Year 7 induction booklet and documentation, options and career information are other very good sources of information made available to parents. Students' annual school reports are very informative and effectively inform parents about the achievements their children make. They are very good indicators of what students can do, how they can improve and for targets agreed as they move on through the school. Individual Educational Plans for special educational needs students are good generally, although for subject areas are not sufficiently specific across all subjects.
66. The contribution of parents to their children's learning is very good. They are enthusiastic to know about the curriculum, to make suggestions and respond positively when approached by the school to follow up school or homework. They care about their school and are very supportive in helping the school to be a place where their children want to be. They are proud of their school and this encourages their children to have a sense of value, achievement and success.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

67. The headteacher has an impressive vision for the school, which is apparent in the provision of an efficient and caring working environment in which students can learn and grow. The school aims support this, one of which is "to foster a sense of belonging, care and enjoyment in which all students have the opportunity to develop self-esteem, respect for others, tolerance and self-discipline". Parents and inspectors recognise the very clear direction he sets and the very good support he receives from his deputy and the newly formed senior management team.
68. The school's values are obvious to visitors. Courtesy and respect for the individual are paramount and the students reflect this in their day-to-day approach to school life, its work and its activities. Relationships are very good indeed.
69. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is very good. All teachers are used to having their lessons observed by the senior management team and from this observation they receive good feedback. Their professional development is then discussed and they seek professional advice in order that they can improve their classroom practice. There are numerous files of lesson observations, which

follow the OFSTED format; along with these are a significant number of in-service applications and evaluations. This area is very well managed and supported.

70. School priorities are clearly stated in the School Improvement Plan. These are often specific to a main school focus area; very detailed planning accompanies them and the priorities are reviewed as part of this planning. Targets are realistic and reflect the upward trend in examination results. As a generalisation, the school expects an approximate rise of five per cent for results at Key Stage 3 and 4; targets for the sixth form are less clear.
71. Together with the headteacher, the governors and senior management team are energetic, committed and very effective. They are instrumental in bringing about considerable change for the better. They pursue high standards; they tend to focus on ensuring pastoral excellence, which they believe underpins high academic achievement. The very good ethos in the school is indicative of this and improvements made in monitoring and evaluation of teaching, better assessment procedures and refurbishment of the accommodation are all beginning to yield success in terms of external examination results. Department managers play an active part and are successful except in music where there are some good outcomes but management is weak.
72. The governors have an excellent understanding of the needs of the school. They work with departments and are very much "hands on" to ensure progress. Together they also work with groups of parents and students, for example, when they take on major decorating and gardening projects. The school is very fortunate to have such a strong governing body.
73. Very good leadership and management combined with good teaching, very positive relationships, attitudes and behaviour, when set against an average expenditure per pupil and a relatively high transient student population, ensure that the school provides good value for money.

#### Efficiency

74. Financial management is very good. The new governing body is well informed and closely involved in making decisions. Two years ago, it inherited a deficit of £126,000. An interest-free loan to cover the debt was secured from the Local Education Authority. The school has budgeted to pay off the loan over four years and put in place financial procedures which are efficient and stable despite the impact of the deficit. The improvement plan lists priorities for action in all areas of school life. It includes the likely number of students until 2003, the main focus areas needed to cope with healthy development and a contingency fund. The last two auditors' reports found all important features of accounting to be in order. Reports are discussed at governors' meetings, and recommendations acted on. All developments are regularly evaluated.
75. In order to pay off the inherited debt, the school had to reduce its staffing two years ago, but without seriously reducing the ratio of staff to students, which remains at the national average. Income per pupil is above the average for schools with sixth forms and expenditure per pupil is average, thereby giving the school a surplus. Money spent on the school's resources is at the national level. The number of computers is smaller than the national average but ease of access compensates for this. Use of technology in administration is good and is likely to get better still when the newly appointed network manager has become fully effective. Use of technology in lessons is satisfactory where it occurs; in maths and modern foreign languages it should be greater.
76. The new senior management team and bursar handle all the school's financial affairs with a high degree of competence. Allocations of funds to departments are now based on a weighted formula, which is clear to all. Every head of department receives a budget statement every month. The school has recently installed devices to increase site security and improved the foyer area and lower corridor. This is money exceptionally well spent. Grants for special educational needs and staff development are also effectively spent for their designated purposes. The deputy head has to approve all training courses and she evaluates their effectiveness. Secretarial and support staff provide a most efficient service and the school runs well on a daily basis.
77. The previous inspection report found that there were few strategies for replacing equipment and some staff did not understand the criteria by which allocations were made to departments. Both these weaknesses have been remedied. Since then procedures have been sharpened and high standards very well maintained.

78. There has been a large turnover of teachers during the last two years. Most have been replaced but there are now five fewer teachers with a consequent reduction in staffing costs. Some classes have become larger but this has not had a significant effect on learning. Most teachers are teaching the subject for which they are qualified. A few specialist teaching posts have been difficult to fill. For example, in food technology non-qualified staff are being used and in information technology the post is filled temporarily. The high turnover of staff in modern languages has had an adverse effect on students' attitudes. Adequate technical staff are working in subject areas such as science, technology and information and communication technology. There is no technical support in art. The school has a generous provision of educational support and administrative staff. Learning support assistants are very helpful and are often parents.
79. The school has a very well structured programme for the induction of new teachers. New staff are invited into school at the end of the year and provided with the necessary information. Mentors are appointed to work with the new teacher for the first year. New teachers are very satisfied with the arrangements. Newly qualified teachers are supported by a similar programme and also have the benefit of the Bracknell Forest newly qualified teachers' training programme.
80. The school is very active and efficient in training post-graduate students from Reading University. Mentors are appointed and teachers in training also meet the co-ordinator at least once per week. Two students undergoing training in the school were very satisfied with the training provided and the help given by all teachers.

#### Accommodation

81. The school benefits from an attractive and spacious site, which is shared by other community groups. The accommodation has been considerably improved since the last inspection with the provision of outside seating areas and the refurbishment and decoration of a number of the teaching rooms and facilities.
82. The school manages the available accommodation well and students and staff work hard to make the most of the available facilities. Most departments are in suited sets of rooms, which are generally of good quality, although the accommodation of art and technology is in need of upgrading. Some of the rooms in which English is taught are too small for the classes that use them. The school has begun to refurbish the toilets but this work is yet to be completed.
83. The governors' premises committee oversees a rolling maintenance programme, which is proving effective. The buildings are very well maintained by the premises manager and his staff and are cleaned to a high standard. There is no evidence of graffiti or vandalism and, although there is some litter after break and lunchtimes, this is quickly cleared away.
84. At the last inspection some vandalism had occurred out of school hours but with the installation of closed circuit television this has been considerably reduced.
85. The physical education facilities, which are shared by the Sandhurst Sports Centre, are good quality and have a positive effect on the attainment of the students. The administrative accommodation is of high quality and makes a very positive and welcoming impact on visitors to the school. The condition, appearance and effective use of the accommodation, together with the excellent displays of students' work, provide a very pleasant environment in which to teach and learn.

#### Resources for Learning

86. Expenditure on resources for learning is just below the level spent nationally but all departments, apart from modern foreign languages, have sufficient materials and equipment to meet curriculum needs. The modern foreign languages department does not have sufficient text books for some of its students.
87. The system for deciding capitation allowances has been changed from one which is historically based to a formula based arrangement. This has only recently been introduced and departments are still getting used to it. It does, however, appear to be a more efficient system for the allocation resources.
88. The library, which is readily available to all staff and students, is well stocked with books and materials which include CD-ROMS, video tapes and films. All resources are in good condition and are carefully catalogued. The library is well used and efficiently managed by a library technician who provides considerable help and guidance. Students are well served by the careers library that

provides a comprehensive range of books and literature related to higher education opportunities and employment prospects.

89. The number of computers the school has is below the national average but this, in part, is compensated by the efficient timetabling of their use.
90. The leadership of special educational needs (SEN) is very good. The fairly recently appointed SEN manager has worked very hard to improve the provision for students and students with SEN. There is a clear and detailed action plan.
91. At the previous inspection the co-ordination of provision was not well established; a limited range of methods was used to teach students. Systems for assessing, monitoring and reviewing progress were not in place. Support and use of resources were not always targeted well. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were not in place and the pastoral system did not contribute formally to the process of individual planning. All of these areas have been improved and there is now a clear and detailed special educational needs policy. Appropriate procedures have been put into place, including those for identifying students' needs. The school monitors and evaluates provision for the learning and progress of students with special educational needs. LSAs are more efficiently deployed. It is too soon to see the full impact of these improvements. Individual Education Plans are now all in place with generalised targets. The need to improve information and communication technology resources for students with special educational needs has been identified by the special educational needs manager.
92. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. In just under half of the subject areas provision is already good. Students make satisfactory progress overall in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. Students are moved up, down and off the register for special educational needs appropriately. Provision for students with statements is good and they make good progress. Progress made by more able students is good overall. In Key stage 3 it is satisfactory and in Key Stage 4 it is good.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

93. In order to improve the school, the governors, senior staff and staff of the school need to take the following action:
- Improve the balance of time allocations for all subjects of the curriculum by:
    - ensuring that all students have enough time to cover the Locally Agreed Syllabus in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form for religious education;
    - ensuring that all students can cover the programme of study for information and communication technology, particularly at Key Stage 3;
    - ensuring all students receive sufficient time allocation to cover A-level courses (in the context of the new sixth-form structure for September 2000).
  - Structure more effectively and allow more opportunities for:
    - numeracy across the curriculum by establishing productive ways of anticipating the needs of other subjects and by establishing good practice within the mathematics curriculum;
    - accurate assessment of students' work in information and communication technology assessment;
    - the enhancement of study skills in the sixth form;
    - spiritual development.
  - Improve the quality of provision for music in Key Stage 3 by:
    - improving the planning and assessment in order to fulfil National Curriculum requirements
    - ensuring these are systematically implemented
    - systematically monitoring to ensure that these initiatives are introduced effectively

### **Subsidiary evidence**

- Ensure all students receive a daily act of collective worship;
- Make more effective use of the 15 minute morning registration time.

## **The Sixth Form**

94. The sixth form is basically effective. It has a number of strengths and a few weaknesses, some of which are not within the school's control.
95. The point score for GCE A-level, although in recent years well below national averages, results not from low teaching standards but from a recruitment problem. The school has enormous competition from a local sixth form college and loses some students to this. The main reason for leaving appears to be that the college offers a new start. A significant group do well at GCSE and continue to do well at A-level; however, a significant number of students have been allowed into the sixth form with low entry requirements. These students are not let down and most of them receive grades which enable them to take the next step in education. A great number go to university. They also have the opportunity to take GNVQ subjects at intermediate and advanced level. The vast majority pass these courses. It is important to ensure that those taking advanced level courses have sufficient time; at present they receive only four hours per subject, which is below average.
96. The school goes out of its way to accommodate students' choices of subjects but until recruitment increases this approach presents problems in planning the curriculum each year.
97. Lessons seen in the sixth form confirm that teaching is good overall. Teachers are conscientious about their planning and take a personal interest in their students, most of whom they have known for five years. Expectations could be higher; some students feel they are not pushed sufficiently. A tightening of day-to-day procedures is already under way and sixth formers who are not performing sufficiently well or whose attendance is unsatisfactory, under the terms of a contract that all sign (including parents) at the beginning of their course, are liable to be asked to improve or leave. Group sizes are improving and now not only prove cost effective but have introduced a competitive ethos, which has been lacking in the past. This is a developing area within the school.

## **English as an Additional Language**

98. There are six students on the head teacher's form who are identified as needing support due to having English as an additional language. Until recently two of the six had genuine need of support due to their arrival in England from other countries. One of them has since left the school and the other progressed so rapidly with help from the peripatetic language team that this support is now no longer needed and so it has been withdrawn. Of the other four students identified, although English is not their first language at home, they are fluent and competent in the English language and do not require further help.
99. While there is no specialist staffing in the school, systems for assessing students' language needs are in place and the special educational needs manager can readily get support if and when it is necessary.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	163
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	75

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1%	17%	50%	30%	2%	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	987	140
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	56	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	19	2
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	142	N/a

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	6 (0)

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	48

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.1
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	88	73	161

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	65	59
	Girls	51	48	44
	Total	101	113	103
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	63([62])	70([67])	64([65])
	National	64([65])	62([60])	54([57])
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	29([32])	47([41])	29([29])
	National	28([35])	38([36])	23([27])

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46	57	53
	Girls	53	43	44
	Total	99	100	97
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	62([65])	63([65])	61([65])
	National	64([62])	64([64])	60([62])
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	36([25])	42([42])	23([30.5])
	National	31([31])	37([37])	28 ([31])

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	98	86	184

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	47	90	94
	Girls	50	78	81
	Total	97	168	175
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	52.7([52.7])	91.3([95])	95([97])
	National	46.3([44.6])	90.7([89.8])	95.7([95.2])

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.3 ([41 ])
	National	37.8 ([ ])

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	34	68
	National		[ ]

### **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	27	30

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	8.9	12.8	11 ([11.2 ])	2.7	6.7	4.7 ([6 ])
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 ([17.6 ])	2.7	2.8	2.8 ([ 2.8 ])

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	8	88
	National	6	[82.5 ]

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		[N/A]

### ***Ethnic background of students***

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	4
Indian	8
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	0
White	979
Any other minority ethnic group	7

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.8
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	377

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	[78.2]
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 2	[ n/a]
Key Stage 3	[25]
Key Stage 4	[23]

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	25	7
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998
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	£
Total income	2,508,659
Total expenditure	2,317,340
Expenditure per pupil	2,311
Balance brought forward from previous year	-108,854
Balance carried forward to next year	82,465

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

1003

Number of questionnaires returned

123

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	50	7	2	3
My child is making good progress in school.	50	44	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	62	7	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	58	17	2	2
The teaching is good.	27	65	3	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	40	15	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	37	3	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	37	6	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	41	46	8	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	47	42	2	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	54	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	47	15	4	6

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Some concern was raised about the open access to the school site.

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

**ENGLISH**

100. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national average. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, taken at fourteen, the proportion of students reaching level 5 or above was close to the average for all schools and the percentage reaching level 6 or above was just above average. Students' performance in English tests has improved in the last three years, in line with national trends, but attainment has been consistently below the levels reached in mathematics and science and below levels achieved in similar schools.
101. Reading skills and speaking and listening skills in lessons are better than those in writing. Students near the end of Key Stage 3 across the attainment sets read well for their ages. During the inspection week students read successfully and confidently from Shakespeare's original text at the beginning of their study of Romeo and Juliet. In all English lessons students read silently from books of their own choice as well as reading aloud and this contributes usefully to the continuing improvement of their skills. Speaking and listening skills develop well because teachers regularly organise group and paired activities in lessons which require all students to think, to question, to discuss and to respond to the whole class on issues. Interesting examples were seen of Year 8 students building up character profiles by asking each other questions and of Year 7 students working in groups to decide how to write a persuasive letter. Students' writing varies in quantity, accuracy and clarity of expression across the teaching groups. In higher attaining groups it is above the national average; in the lower attaining groups it is well below this. Some narrative writing on the theme 'The Challenge' by Year 9 students in the work sampled was of a particularly high standard. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in about the same proportion as is found nationally.
102. The overall attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. This is reflected in the 1999 GCSE examination when 57 per cent of students gained an A\* - C grade in English, a figure just above the national average and 75.5 per cent gained an A\* - C grade in English Literature, a proportion well above the national figure. All students entered for the examinations achieved A-G grades, an indication that students at all attainment levels, including those with special educational needs, completed the examination course. It indicates also that students make at least satisfactory progress in English through the school. In the English Literature examination, 66.2 per cent of students achieved a grade A or B pass, a percentage more than twice that achieved nationally. The department teaches the literature syllabus particularly successfully. In lessons seen during the inspection students in different attainment groups in Year 11 showed confidence and perceptiveness in discussions and analysing poems by Asian and African poets. At this stage reading and speaking and listening skills are still stronger than those of writing across the whole school population. The new head of department and her team have already started to examine the schemes of work and teaching approaches to try to redress the balance.
103. The attainment of students working towards the GCE A-level English is in line with expectations for the course. In recent years almost all students have gained a graded pass but relatively few have achieved the highest grades. In 1999 all twenty-three candidates were successful in gaining graded passes with two students reaching B grades and 3 achieving grade C. This is below the national percentage for higher level grades but better overall than the national pass rate for grades A – E. Students in both Years 12 and Year 13 show competence in reading and analysing an appropriately broad and challenging range of texts.
104. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is predominantly good. A quarter of the English lessons seen in the inspection were of a high standard. All lessons start with a few minutes of silent reading from books chosen by students. This provides a calm start to lessons and regular reading practice, often reinforced in KS3 by visits to the school library to change books. Most teachers use time effectively, changing activities and approaches skilfully to keep students fully involved. In the most successful lessons there is a high level of challenge which builds on students' existing skills and stretches them further. A Year 7 lesson, for example, used a shared novel 'The Silver Sword' as a source for a writing exercise using emotive language and introducing new ideas through a discussion of sympathy and empathy. In lessons seen in Year 9 teachers confidently used students' drama skills to interpret and to improvise work based on the early scenes of Romeo and Juliet. In a

minority of lessons learning was held back by teachers' spending longer than necessary on detailed explanations of the tasks. In a small number of lessons good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to help students, particularly those with low literacy skills, to develop confidence with writing and presentation. In a Year 11 group most students showed competent skills in organising text and illustrations to prepare a booklet on the life and times of Shakespeare. A similar exercise with a group of Year 9 students, many with special educational needs, was helpful in developing their sense of achievement in presenting good finished work. However, there exists a lack of development of more precise literacy targets for SEN students, both in English and in the school generally. Students' attitudes to work are good. There is an ethos of mutual respect which enables them to feel confident in their learning and the relationships they build.

105. The department is very well led. A new head of department has made a good start this year in moving the department forward. Areas identified for improvement include: the improvement and development of schemes of work in all years, updating and improving the range of resources for learning, especially to develop and extend writing activities, and the wider use of ICT by all teachers to broaden the curriculum. Some training for teachers has already taken place. A programme for monitoring teaching is now in place to help to ensure that good practice is shared. Assessment arrangements are clearly set out which build on the best of previous practice and match the school's central requirements. The immediate targets are to improve the performance of students in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and in the GCSE English examinations by developing language skills which have been given insufficient attention.
106. Standards in English are similar to those described at the time of the last inspection, although GCSE English Literature results are higher now. Drama lessons still make a helpful contribution to students' speaking and listening skills. Teaching is better overall than at the previous inspection when sometimes expectations of students were low. This is not the case now. The accommodation for teaching, which was described as 'cramped' in the previous report, is much improved, although two teaching rooms are rather small for large classes.
107. The school library supports students' reading development well. A collection of well over two thousand works of fiction, mainly current, is rotated regularly by the county library service. Most Key Stage 3 students are regular borrowers as they need their own chosen books at the beginning of all English lessons. Literacy skills for students with special educational needs are supported satisfactorily by specialist teachers and classroom assistants. In most subjects, but particularly in history, geography and religious education, students are encouraged to write in different styles for a range of different purposes. Oracy skills are improved in art, drama and music lessons.

## **DRAMA**

108. Drama is taught as a discrete subject to all students at Key Stage 3 and as an optional course at Key Stage 4. Seven students in Year 13 follow a GCE A-level course in theatre studies.
109. By the end of Key Stage 3 all students have completed a valuable foundation course which has given them opportunities to develop a range of dramatic skills and techniques. Year 9 students use space effectively, work well collaboratively in small and large groups with little self-consciousness, and improvise quickly when required to do this. They evaluate their own performance and that of others competently and tactfully. Skills that have been learned are often transferred to dramatic performances for assemblies and for the interpretation of scenes from plays or stories in English lessons. Skills of speaking and listening are good for most students. The overall level of drama skill attained by the end of the Key Stage is high.
110. Drama is a successful GCSE optional subject at Key Stage 4. In the 1999 examination over 70 per cent of students achieved an A\* - C GCSE pass and all of the twenty-four candidates gained A and F grades. Both pass rates are close to but above the national average. By the end of the course students have learned how to stage and light a short play and how to work in character for an extended period. The Year 13 students observed briefly when preparing and rehearsing a version of 'Cinderella' in the style of Brecht have lively imaginations and average practical skills.
111. Teaching is shared mainly by three teachers with appropriate qualifications, assisted by three other teachers with a keen interest in the subject. In the lessons observed the teaching was good. Preparation is usually thorough, good use is made of the spacious drama studio and lessons proceed

at a lively pace, with many changes of activity. Students of all ages show great enthusiasm for drama activities. This is seen in lessons and on occasions when tutor groups prepare plays for their year assemblies. A Year 8 tutor group, after an informative talk on anorexia, were very quick to move into rehearsal mode to devise short plays. Priorities for the future include the development and expansion of the outline schemes of work and the further development of the assessment procedures for all year groups.

## **MATHEMATICS**

112. The results of the Key Stage 2 national tests in mathematics in 1999 show that the attainment of students on entry is above average for their age. However, standardised tests set internally by the school suggest broadly average achievement that has been steady over the past few years. A concentration on improving attainment in statutory tests in primary schools may be responsible for this.
113. At the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of students reaching Level 5 or above in the national tests for 1999 was above the national average for all schools. The percentage gaining Level 6 or above was also above the national average. In comparison with schools in similar contexts, students' performance was close to the average. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Taking the last four years together, the performance of all students is above the national average for their age group. There is an improving trend since the previous inspection.
114. In 1999 the proportion of students obtaining GCSE grades A\* - C for mathematics was above the national average for all schools. The average points score has been steady over the past three years and since the previous inspection. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, both of which are above the national averages. In the 1999 examinations, virtually all students obtained grades A\* - G, which is above the national figure for all schools and shows a slight increase over the past three years.
115. The percentage of students gaining grades A to E in the GCE A-level mathematics examinations was close to the national average in 1999 and is similar for the past three years, showing a steady trend.
116. The work seen during the inspection, including lessons and a scrutiny of students' previous work, indicates that attainment at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 is broadly in line with the national average. The higher attaining students have above average attainment that is supported well through the grouping arrangements and good teaching. Progress through Key Stage 3 shows a slightly above average trend. Progress in Key Stage 4 is sound. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in line with their abilities at both key stages.
117. At Key Stage 3, students use practical equipment such as protractors and rulers with sufficient skill and accuracy when using and applying mathematics. The low attaining students are, for example, reasonably accurate in using coins to calculate money problems. Students make sensible estimates of angles and are acquiring the skills to measure angles correctly. The students' abilities to generalise mathematical ideas and reason are enhanced through the good selection of mathematical investigation work at both key stages. However, their skills in this work are not developed very far since much of the teaching and work is not presented in an investigative style, although there are good exceptions.
118. Numeracy skills are satisfactory overall at both Key Stages 3 and 4, although numeracy receives insufficient direct emphasis by the teachers. A large minority of students enter the school with undeveloped number understanding and skills, so that recall and use of number facts is slow and many students resort to finger counting. By Year 9 most students know, or can work out, the multiplication or division facts needed. They are reasonably quick with addition and subtraction, although the lower attaining students remain insecure. Students' numeracy skills are applied across the mathematic curriculum and used appropriately across the whole curriculum, for example in science and geography. The higher attaining students are quick and accurate with mental calculation and have a good understanding of number relationships. Students with average attainment use number confidently in many contexts, such as probability and trigonometry, although they are frequently inaccurate with specific calculations. Students with special educational needs

produce written work using standard methods with the help of skilled support from the teachers and learning support assistants.

119. The satisfactory work in number processes provides a good foundation and is applied to good effect in the early algebra of Key Stage 3. The higher attaining students have a good understanding of simple formulae and changing the subject of an equation. Students use algebraic notation with growing confidence, to use trial and improve methods for  $x(x+1) = 259$ , for example. The higher attaining students in Key Stage 4 apply the sine formula correctly in finding an unknown angle, using algebraic skills confidently. They have, for example, a good understanding of how to set out line equations on a graph. They also have the algebraic skills to solve the simultaneous equations. Average and low attaining students have a basic understanding of symbols and brackets.
120. At Key Stage 3, students know the names of different sized angles and are reasonably skilled in the use of protractors. They find bearings correctly. Previous work shows that students can use isometric paper to represent solid shapes. The higher attaining students in Year 8 have a very good understanding of early statistics and of the mean of grouped data. By Year 9 average attaining students have a secure understanding of sample space diagrams in probability. The lower attaining students understand how to interpret pie charts, for example of fat or protein content, although several students confuse the per cent sign with degrees. At Key Stage 4 the higher attaining students have a good knowledge of trigonometry. Average attaining students know how to calculate the tangent ratio though are not always accurate in identifying it or in their calculations. Low attaining students usually calculate the unknown angle in triangles and quadrilaterals correctly. Students have a satisfactory understanding of handling data. Most students understand how to communicate mathematically through symbols and graphs and usually explain their working sensibly.
121. Students following the GCE Advanced Level mathematics courses have a developing understanding of the subject and show satisfactory attainment at this stage of the course. In mechanics they apply their knowledge satisfactorily to finding tensions in strings, for example, and their manipulation of equations and ability with algebra are sound. In calculus they follow routines for integrating a logarithmic function correctly with some help, for example, and their algebraic skills are mostly secure. Those students taking further mathematics understand how two circles may intersect and apply their knowledge well to suggest whether they touch internally. Overall, the students demonstrate a broadly secure knowledge across the syllabus.
122. Students' learning and progress are satisfactory overall during Key Stages 3 and 4, with slightly greater progress at Key Stage 3. The higher attaining students at both key stages frequently make good progress as a result of good teaching with worthwhile tasks. The great majority of students settle to their work well and take an active part in their learning, supporting their attainment. Generally, students recall previous work and are acquiring the skills to apply it to new topics. The satisfactory and good progress observed is related to the effective grouping system, skilled teaching and the well-structured scheme of work. The faculty policy of setting regular homework is mostly effective in promoting progress, although marking practice is not consistent. There are few written comments to identify what students have learnt securely and where further understanding is required.
123. The students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good at all key stages, with a few exceptions. The higher attaining students are consistent in demonstrating good levels of interest, sustained concentration and the capacity to take work on for themselves. Average and lower attaining students are more reliant on the teachers for motivation, which is usually clear and encouraging. There is usually a good, purposeful atmosphere with a sense of effort and enjoyment. Relationships amongst the students and with the teachers are usually good and support progress well. Most students have gained routine learning skills, for example of following a method and checking answers.
124. The quality of teaching is good overall in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge on most occasions and set high expectations for behaviour and work. The mathematics scheme of work provides a good basis for lesson planning, which is satisfactory overall. However, there is seldom any note of the teaching style to be used or the overall shape of lessons and at times lessons have insufficient teacher exposition and discussion about the mathematical ideas and methods. While students share their findings as they work, few tasks are planned for the students to collaborate in finding solutions. Teachers' notes on the board



are usually understandable, although the layout and diagrams are sometimes unclear. In a few lessons the teaching methods and strategies are highly effective in prompting the students to think and generalise. This was shown for example in a Key Stage 4 lesson on the graphical solution of equations where the interactions between the teacher and class set good interest and challenge. Classroom management is good, with constructive relationships, and most lessons move with appropriate pace. There are several good question and answer sessions, although most questions are for factual answers. There is a good focus on the knowledge and skills of mathematics but overall insufficient attention is given to discussion and reasoning. There is also insufficient direct attention to the teaching of numeracy skills, indicating a further weakness in lesson planning. Assessment procedures are good but diagnostic notes on students' difficulties are seldom made as a basis for further teaching. The faculty makes provision for investigational work and problem-solving, although this approach is underdeveloped within normal lessons.

125. The department has made several improvements since the previous inspection that are helping to raise standards. The curriculum and tasks are constantly under review. The dedicated and professional staff employ a good variety of teaching methods overall and are self-critical of their own performance. The curriculum for mathematics is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. There is a well-structured scheme of work that provides good progression through both Key Stages 3 and 4. The environment of the rooms is quite pleasant, with several interesting displays of students' work. The head of department provides good leadership for the educational direction of the subject. She has observed lessons by all staff to monitor the quality of provision in the sixth form. Insufficient attention is given to monitoring the quality of lesson planning for methods and progression, though staff discuss their work informally. The results of assessments and examinations are analysed carefully and are used to inform setting arrangements but less so to direct further teaching.
126. The department has a scheme of work and examination syllabus in place, with various supporting policies. While the head of department is recently appointed she is taking a sensible approach to managing change. The range and quality of learning resources is satisfactory, and they are accessible, although there is insufficient equipment to enhance numeric skills. There are useful links with the local primary schools through one of the teachers, where numeracy is seen as a subject of increasing importance for liaison. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the efficiency of the school through the standards attained and the high level of professional commitment of all department staff.

## **SCIENCE**

127. When students arrive at the school, their attainment in science is broadly in line with the national average. The attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 of those currently in Year 7 was better than average but that of older students when they were at the same stage was average. Science receives a generous allocation of time in Year 7 and students make substantial progress during this year. Science is taught in ability groups throughout both key stages and this contributes towards good progress made in Key Stage 3 by students with special educational needs and by higher attaining students.
128. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in statutory tests has been above the national average for the past two years, indicating significant progress by students during their first three years at the school. Attainment in work seen matches or exceeds national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, students have developed good practical skills and are able to make predictions and to discuss these in the light of experimental results. They have covered the content of the statutory Programme of Study systematically and, in the higher attaining sets, very thoroughly. Students in these sets are able to use technical terms well and can appreciate the way in which quite complicated topics can be organised and understood, for example, the functions of different types of cell. Their written work is often immaculately presented. Throughout the key stage, appropriate use is made of graphs and simple mathematical ideas. The use of computers is limited but increasing. Most lower attaining students make sound or good progress in Key Stage 3 and the proportion failing to reach at least Level 4 in the 1999 statutory assessments was well below the national average.
129. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 was in line with the national average in 1997 and 1998. In 1999, the proportion of students attaining grades A\* - C exceeded the national average by a small but significant margin. Students make sound progress. Those in higher sets are able to use quite

sophisticated concepts, explaining, for example, how electrolysis operates by electron transfer. Those in middle sets have a sound knowledge across the attainment targets. Many lower attaining students follow a single science option and make good progress. For example, one such group knew something of alpha particles, having been given the opportunity to use radioactive sources and a Geiger counter under careful supervision.

130. There is a strong emphasis on practical activities in both key stages and students are able to carry out experiments competently; however, they regard experiments as sets of instructions to be followed rather than opportunities for discovery and reflection.
131. Attainment at A-level is lower than the national average in biology but broadly in line in chemistry and physics. This is a result of some students being permitted to join the A-level biology course with modest GCSE grades. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades (A and B) is lower than nationally in all three sciences; this reflects recruitment patterns to the sixth form. Relatively few students fail to achieve A to E grades. When due weight is given to each student's performance, the resulting point scores over the past three years are in line with national averages in physics and chemistry but not in biology. Sixth form classes usually include a wide range of attainment: some students are able to grasp facts and concepts with ease while others find the A-level course very difficult. Teachers know their classes well and give much individual help, allowing students to reach their potential.
132. Teaching is good overall; it is at least satisfactory in nearly every lesson; in about half of lessons it is good or very good. Particular strengths include good command of subject, a lively style, communicating enthusiasm for the subject and delight in the students; good class management, allows practical work to run smoothly even in crowded conditions. Students respond very well to this style of teaching. For example, in a Year 7 lesson with students of well below average attainment some batteries and bulbs were connected on a central table and students took turns to explain how these circuits worked. The others listened intently. The class then worked in groups, constructing series and parallel circuits, and made very good progress, building well on what they had learnt in primary school. The teacher and support assistant worked in close harmony, each responding with praise, encouragement and practical help to the demands of the students. A very good learning atmosphere had been created and students worked hard throughout the lesson.
133. The reverse happens in a very small proportion of lessons where teaching is poorly planned and uninspiring and students are disaffected. This, however, is not typical of the department and, in most lessons, students are well behaved and willing to learn. Teaching which is sound could readily be improved by a more imaginative approach - challenging students to solve problems, for example, rather than just conveying information. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to encourage curiosity and stimulate thinking and students in some lessons rarely ask questions of a scientific nature. Some marking is superficial, with obvious errors (such as missing units) uncorrected, but most is detailed and helpful.
134. The science curriculum is enriched by a thriving tradition of entry to a national science competition and last year's team did well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of science are taught as they arise but the curriculum could be strengthened were these to be treated in a planned way.
135. The science department is well managed. On a day-to-day level, administration is efficient and the technician team contributes well to the smooth running of the department. Over the longer term, the head of science has a clear strategic view and is an effective team leader. There has not been sufficient time since his relatively recent appointment for every initiative to reach completion but attainment in science has improved since the last inspection and continues to do so.

## **ART**

136. Lesson observations, discussions with teachers and students and analysis of their work indicate that at the end of Key Stage 3 students' standards are average. By the end of Year 9, students research pattern styles and vessel shapes within African art and pattern and symbolism in Aboriginal art. They use these as inspiration in their own designs for ceramic work and two-dimensional pattern compositions. Lower attaining students have some difficulty in depicting form. All talk confidently about their work and their newly acquired knowledge of African and Aboriginal art. They show an understanding of the spirituality and symbolism, particularly in Aboriginal art, and their work reflects

this. Progress is satisfactory. There is no significant difference in the standards of boys and girls. Standards observed match teacher assessment. Students' standards in three-dimensional work are above average, for example, their 'ceramic shoes'. This exercise indicated their skilful handling of clay.

137. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are also broadly average. The proportion of students gaining A\* to C in GCSE in 1999 is broadly in line with national averages. Girls' standards are just above and boys' standards are below the national averages. However, boys' standards have showed particular improvement over the last 3 years. All results have improved greatly since the previous inspection, rising steadily over the past three years. The number of students achieving grades A\* to G is in line with national averages. Students on average performed better in art than in other subjects. Girls performed significantly better.
138. By the end of Key Stage 4, students extend their knowledge and understanding of pattern by carrying out small exploratory studies in a variety of media and techniques. Lower attainers have some difficulty in concentrating but persevere to improve their work. Students have completed work on 'masks' using a variety of media, including watercolour, oil pastels and clay. For example, a higher attaining pupil produced an excellent clay mask. Higher attainers use colour boldly but sensitively when working on their Egyptian assignment. They use charcoal and paint well, showing an awareness of tonal value and they effectively use a variety of brushes, as in a golden mask and small studies of a bird's head.
139. Average attainers demonstrate sensitive tonal work using pencil when drawing seed heads. Other students improve their mock examination piece. They work carefully on portraiture, using either objects and symbols or likeness. One or two students have difficulty with size and proportion in their 'likeness' portraits. They achieve well in three-dimensional work, for example when making ceramic heads. Students are developing their individual creative and critical analysis skills. They are confident and articulate when describing their own work and that of other artists, including Picasso, who inspired them. They evaluate their compositions and discuss how they can improve them in order to gain a higher grade. Students make particularly good progress in tonal drawing. They use their literacy skills efficiently in discussion and when writing evaluations and critical analyses. They apply their numeracy skills when working on proportion, spatial awareness and perspective. These skills have a positive effect on their standards.
140. The cohort of advanced level students was small in 1999 and national comparisons are not appropriate. However, 3 out of 4 students gained A grades and 1 gained a D grade. This represents a great improvement in standards, which have been rising over the past 3 years and since the previous inspection when they were unsatisfactory. By the end of the sixth form course students show maturity in their ability to follow their own creative ideas. They show confidence and a boldness to work on a large scale, for example, a sculpture of a seated figure after the style of Henry Moore and acrylic paintings inspired by fish. They work very sensitively in pencil, pastel and colour, depicting tone, shape and form in portraits, figure drawings and drawings of prawns. Students have good skills in critical analysis of their own and other artists' work. For example, they express their surprise at the small size of Salvador Dali's painting 'Metamorphosis of Narcissus' and its powerful impact on their senses, which led them to research its symbolism. They research projects well, visiting art galleries and exhibitions. Their sketchbook work is appropriate and thoroughly underpins their projects. They present personal studies well, using information technology, including a scanner. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. The tight structuring of the curriculum has improved this. Students with special educational needs make good progress. There are no students with English as an additional language.
141. Throughout the school students' skills in investigating and making are similar to those in their knowledge and understanding of art. This is because of good teaching.
142. Teaching in art is good. Both art teachers are art specialists. Very secure subject knowledge allows them to give good demonstrations and specific teaching points appropriately. They challenge all students, including those with talent and those with special educational needs. This has a positive impact on students' learning and progress. For example, students in Year 7 make good progress in printing. In Year 8 they make good progress in observational drawing and when making a gift bag decorated with repeated patterns.

143. The teachers have worked hard to develop a good working atmosphere in their classrooms. This helps students to settle quickly to and remain working. Teachers' management skills and relationships are good. Their expectations are high, lessons are planned well and they explain tasks clearly to students, who then know exactly what is expected of them in order to improve their standards. They use teaching methods appropriate to students' needs; for example, students who have great difficulty in observational drawing can sometimes attempt exercises in other techniques, such as batik.
144. Teachers encourage students to explore and define their own creativity and to recognise the levels at which they are working. This encourages students to become more independent and push themselves to higher grades. Teachers give homework regularly. This reinforces learning. Because of good teaching and good relationships students, have very good attitudes to art. They work very hard and are often fully engrossed in their work. Good management ensures good behaviour and mutual respect.
145. The head of department manages the subject very well. She has monitored standards and analysed results carefully. Detailed schemes of work have been written and are now delivered in a structured and focused manner. This, along with other factors, including good management of behaviour and improved school ethos, has resulted in standards being raised markedly and continuously over the past 3 years. They have improved from unsatisfactory to broadly in line with national averages at Key Stages 3 and 4, and above at advanced level. This structured approach is also ensuring that students in Years 7, 8, 12 and many in Year 10 are working above standards expected. The teachers work well as a team and are committed to improving students' learning and achievement.
146. In the previous report, art was unsatisfactory in almost every aspect. All points apart from one have been successfully addressed. GCSE examination results, which were well below, are now broadly in line. Advanced level results have improved from in line to 3 out of 4 students achieving A grades. Teaching which was unsatisfactory is now good. Resources have improved (including the purchase of a new kiln). Other improvements include students' behaviour and their respect for the school equipment, their attitudes to the subject and the progressive development of art skills, including those in visual and critical analysis. In the previous inspection, the art accommodation was observed to be poor. It is still unsatisfactory. One room is too small and conditions are cramped when it is used for full or GCSE classes.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

147. Standards of achievement have improved considerably since the last inspection so that 1999 GCSE results are now above the national average overall.
148. The 1999 Key Stage 3 teacher assessment results are well above average. There is an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge that provides an effective understanding of technological terms and processes. However, analysis of students' Key Stage 3 work shows that attainment is often below expectations. The design process is generally not clearly tackled and presentation is below average for Year 9 students. Some manufactured items do not challenge the students sufficiently and are poorly made. Students gradually develop their knowledge of materials by using card, wood, metal and plastic to make products. Systems and control are taught by science as well as technology teachers but structures needs greater emphasis.
149. GCSE results for 1999 are above average in graphic products and resistant materials but electronics results are below average. Results in food technology have been above average in recent years but fell to be near average in 1999. Girls did better than boys in design and technology. GCSE results are good when compared with other results in the same school. Attainment in lessons is in line with expectations and students work particularly well when engaged on examination work. Recent A-level results for design and technology vary but are near average for 1999.
150. Teaching is good overall; in three quarters of the lessons it was good and it was satisfactory in about one quarter of the lessons in all key stages. Teachers are well qualified and use their understanding of their subject area to increase the knowledge and skills of the students. Lessons are well planned in all subject areas and teaching methods are generally appropriate. Management of students is effective and relationships are very good, although pace is sometimes too slow when students are creating designs without a clear time limit. Regular discussion takes place during lessons where

teachers advise individuals and groups of students. This provides the basis of an assessment system that gives feedback to the students. Students with special educational needs are given appropriate advice to enable them to achieve good products. More gifted students are also given help and encouragement so that they design more complex products. Higher expectations are made clear during lessons and by marking work so that progress is maximised. Most work is marked and sometimes given a constructive comment. Homework is used on a regular basis to increase opportunities for learning. A substantial number of A-level students develop a wide range of skills as they prepare their coursework. Safety policies need to be reinforced at regular intervals.

151. Teachers frequently encourage students to use information technology in their work but there are other applications that could be developed. A limitation in the use of information technology is imposed by the lack of suitable computers and an appropriate location for them. This is particularly the case in the food technology area where there are no computers. However, the design software used in electronics is very effective and is a good example of computer-aided design. Students also benefit from the use of a computer-controlled engraving machine.
152. The students enjoy the work and look forward to taking items home. They work well in groups and readily exchange ideas. With younger students, skills develop more slowly when they are designing or making. However, they are able to use their imagination when given the opportunity to do so. During Key Stage 4 students have generally increased their skills so that considerable accuracy is possible when shaping materials. Students are interested in the work and are well able to concentrate and solve problems, such as when they were asked to design a desk fan with a concealed switch. Graphical skills develop progressively through all years. Behaviour was satisfactory or good in all lessons. Some Year 10 students are lively but few reprimands are needed. They appreciate the importance of the GCSE examination and are very successful in completing the coursework on time. The enthusiastic sixth form students encourage younger students.
153. The design and technology co-ordinator is enthusiastic and together with other teachers has enabled examination results to be improved. Good relationships and a common purpose are established by the work of the department. Regular meetings are held and several useful contacts with outside organisations are maintained. The departmental documentation is in place but needs further detail giving an overview of the subjects taught and the time to be spent on each topic. An 'open door' policy exists in both areas of the department so that students and teachers are able to co-operate freely. Some team teaching takes place. The rooms are regularly open so that students can continue work during breaks and after school. Technicians provide valuable assistance in both subject areas. They are occasionally able to use their expertise to help students directly. Part time non-specialist teaching in food technology is effective in Years 7 and 8. GCSE results are thoroughly analysed, particularly in food technology. The assessment process has improved since the last inspection but could be further improved by developing a common system for all technology subjects. Parents and sponsors help the work of the department. Accommodation is satisfactory but learning would benefit if there was an additional room within the resistant materials area. . An upstairs room has no exit other than one steep flight of stairs. This could present serious problems in the event of fire.

## GEOGRAPHY

154. Attainment of students is average at the end of Key Stage 3. Students in Year 7 have a good grasp of basic skills. They describe compass directions correctly, produce neat, accurate and well labelled maps and mostly provide appropriate headings and keys. One class, in response to teacher questions, suggested a very good range of leisure activities that could be enjoyed in the mountains and around the coast of Wales. By Year 9 students understand and are able to interpret quite detailed tables of data on indicators of wealth. They can rank countries correctly and are starting to offer valid reasons for the differences between wealthy and poorer countries. The attainment of girls is a little better than that of the boys.
155. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average and has declined in the last three years. In 1999 40 per cent of students gained grades A\* to C and 98 per cent gained grades A\* to G. Attainment at grades A\* to C was 14 per cent lower than the average of other subjects in the school. However, taking into account ability, attainment was just 7 per cent below target. The attainment of girls is significantly better than that of the boys. Students' work reflects a satisfactory grasp of most basic geographical skills and much writing is fluent and accurate. Year 10 students understand and interpret simple hydrographs well and have a good grasp of the processes within river systems that shape landforms. Year 11 students can distinguish clearly between the social, economic and environmental factors that influence quality of life.
156. Attainment at A-level is well below the average point score. However, in 1999 all seven candidates passed with grades ranging from C to E. These results were below the average of other subjects in the school. Over time the number of higher grades A and B have declined but the overall pass rate has improved. Some students join the course with very modest GCSE grades. They have limited background knowledge and study skills are not well developed. Year 12 students interpret maps satisfactorily but require support in the interpretation of graphics illustrating aspects of the hydrological cycle. Year 13 students, researching texts on the development of transport systems in Zaire, identified both positive and negative features accurately. They required support in locating text references to answer questions on particular phases in the development of the steel industry in the United Kingdom.
157. Progress is satisfactory through Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and at A-level. The progress of less able students is satisfactory overall and better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. In their lesson on the Welsh tourist industry, all Year 7 students displayed a growing understanding of the reasons for establishing national parks. Their learning was aided by an attractive wall display. Building on an effective homework task, Year 8 students made very good progress in their understanding of the range of diverse factors that influence manufacturing industries. Skilful questioning aided Year 9 students in making very good progress in their understanding of the different factors that determine life expectancy and why there is a significant difference of life expectancy in richer and poorer countries. Supported by good resources, Year 10 students widened and refined their understanding of the factors that lead to dense populations in some areas of the world and not in others and more able students were able to comment on their distribution. Year 11 students refined and extended their knowledge and understanding of factors that drive people out of areas and attract them to others and, by the end of the lesson, all were able to distinguish clearly between standard of living and quality of life. Year 12 A-level students made good progress in an exploration of land use through Ordnance Survey maps and used evidence correctly to place settlements into a hierarchy. Careful explanation enabled the Year 13 students to achieve a sound grasp of the reasons that are bringing about a decline in the numbers of people employed in manufacturing and increasing opportunities for work in service industries.
158. The attitudes to work of the great majority of students are good and often very good, particularly at Key Stage 3. There are a very small number of boys in Year 10 and a small but significant number of boys in Year 11 whose effort and attitude are unsatisfactory. In one Year 11 class this is having a detrimental effect on the learning of other students. Students work enthusiastically and sustain their concentration particularly when the teaching is stimulating and expectations are high. Students generally collaborate well when working in pairs and small groups.
159. Teaching ranges from satisfactory in Key Stage 3 to good in Key Stage 4 and at A-level. Planning is very good and clearly linked to schemes of work. Learning objectives are clearly communicated in the great majority of lessons. The management of students is mostly very good but only satisfactory overall at Key Stage 4. A good range of teaching and learning styles are employed which are largely

well matched to learning objectives. Questioning is used effectively and most homework is effective in consolidating knowledge and understanding. Marking is systematic, consistent with the policy and sometimes offers clear guidance on how to do better. Where teaching is most effective there is pace and enthusiasm and tasks and resources are well matched to the needs of all students. In the least effective lessons learning objectives are unclear.

160. The curriculum makes a good contribution to the social and moral development of students, particularly through the exploration of the quality of life and comparative studies of peoples from richer and poorer countries. Assessment is guided by a clear policy and practice is consistent. Systematic and detailed records of students' progress are in place. Students' self-evaluation at Key Stage 3 is inconsistent and lacks detail. Neither self-evaluation nor targeting are yet in place for students taking the GCSE. Teacher judgments on levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are a little generous. Collaborative curriculum review and development planning are well established. Monitoring and support from senior management is effective; monitoring within the department is less well developed.
161. Since the last inspection the motivation and attainment in the GCSE groups has declined and fewer students are exceeding expectations. Assessment is better structured. Development planning has been refined and management is more collaborative. Planning for the support of students with special needs is more precise and the resources to support their learning have improved. Overall just satisfactory progress has been made.

## **HISTORY**

162. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average. There is no difference in attainment between boys and girls. By the end of Key Stage 3, Year 9 students can make accurate notes, organising their work efficiently. They have a good understanding of chronology. Able students have good recall, confident in explaining the reasons for the quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Becket, or why the German armies invaded Belgium in 1914. Lower attaining students are often muddled and cannot discuss their work confidently. All students in a mixed ability class could understand the qualities in Richard Arkwright which made him a successful businessman.
163. Grades A\* to C obtained in GCSE in 1999 were near the national average, and above the average for the school. Boys achieved results above the national average for boys, girls slightly below the national average for girls. In the previous three years results were in line with the national average. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work showed that by the end of Key Stage 4 students achieve at the average standard; they can express themselves clearly, researching diligently their special project on the Tower of London, and use evidence to draw their own conclusions. They are aware of limitations in historical sources and can use source material intelligently. However, they are insufficiently aware that events can be interpreted in different ways. The most able students and those with special needs are well catered for, partly by the offer of additional help after school, and partly by the use of special tasks.
164. A-level results are below the national average but in line with other subjects in the school. By the end of the sixth form course students have wide knowledge of the topics they study and can use that knowledge effectively, as a Year 12 group proved in their discussion of Mussolini's policies. However, some students lack the skill of analysis. They use facts to tell a story rather than to explain how and why events occurred. The structuring of essays is often weak.
165. Teaching is good in all key stages. Teachers plan their lessons meticulously, often devising their own materials to see they are appropriate for students of different abilities. They explain clearly and enthusiastically, revealing their own interest in the subject. They expect much to be done at home, and mark the work thoroughly. Sixth form essays sometimes receive more than a page of comments by the teacher. Teachers have created excellent relationships with students, giving them a desire to work hard. However, in sixth form lessons observed there was little discussion. Students are seldom encouraged to question the teacher or each other and have little opportunity to reflect and share ideas. As a result, though students leave a lesson with much new information in their books, they do not sufficiently reflect upon what they have learnt. This to some extent restricts progress and the level of reasoning in their essays. Progress made by students with special educational needs is at least satisfactory.

166. The previous inspection reported that standards of teaching and learning were no more than sound, with inadequate assessment and a lack of challenge for both high and low attainers. Since then a new head of department has overhauled all aspects of managing the department. She has changed the examination board, introduced new schemes of work, tightened procedures for marking and recording progress, organised more visits to places of historical interest and worked out what needs to be done in the future. She monitors what is taught in the classroom and what students write in their books. As a result there has been a marked improvement in all respects, with a significant rise in exam results in the last year. Staff are fully committed to raising standards still higher.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

167. There are no examination results for information technology either at Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 as there is no GCSE course in information and communication technology. However, standards have improved since the last inspection.
168. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught through the subjects of the whole school curriculum. There are no timetabled information and communication technology lessons. The Year 7 induction course mentioned in the last inspection report, where "a range of skills were developing", has been discontinued. At Key Stage 3, analysis of students' work and observation of the capabilities of Year 9 students show that attainment is below average overall. Standards vary greatly depending on a student's interest in information technology. About one third of students use it enthusiastically but others prefer to work by hand. When word processing, students can enter text but are often not able to perform simple manipulations such as moving sentences. Similarly, none of those tested were confidently able to enter a formula to calculate the average of five figures. Achievement is below average at the end of Key Stage 3 because information technology experiences are not consistent and regular during the key stage.
169. At Key Stage 4, there is a wide range of ability with some students being able to understand the insides of a computer and others not wishing to use a keyboard. However, most students have gained sufficient experience from a wide variety of sources to be moderately competent so that they are near national expectations overall by the end of the key stage. Sixth form students are expected to use information technology regularly and therefore increase their learning effectively so that attainment is also average. GNVQ classes attain above expectations in some cases because they use information technology on most days.
170. Cross-curricular use of the computers is widespread. Classes respond well when they are taken to the information technology rooms by a variety of teachers from other departments. Gifted and talented students have generally gained their expertise at home. However, they are generally willing to use their knowledge to help other students when specific techniques are not known. In the process, they reinforce their own learning and make good progress. Students with special educational needs sometimes improve their own self-esteem when presentation of their work is improved by word processing.
171. Due to the cross-curricular arrangements, teaching does not take place at regular intervals for all students. Students do not therefore have equality of opportunity. When teaching is taking place it is effective, although teachers give priority to their own subject rather than to the teaching of information technology skills and techniques. Teachers have appropriate expectations for students' information technology skills but the system does not permit consistent teaching and regular reinforcement of techniques. The quality of day-to-day assessment is poor because teachers do not have time to assess information technology skills.
172. Science, technology, maths, media studies and GNVQ classes encourage students to use information technology for a variety of purposes. There is very good use of music technology in examination classes. English, geography, history and art also make moderate use of the information technology facilities. Students in Year 9 English were studying Shakespeare and created pages that included text and pictures. In science, sensing of temperature is used to draw graphs of cooling curves. Voltages and currents are simulated in the 'Croc-clips' programme. Mathematics and GNVQ classes use spreadsheets for modelling real life situations. Geography classes produce coloured graphs to display data. Relationships between students and teachers are good. No behavioural problems were observed during information and communication technology sessions.



Students use the facilities during breaks and after school so that the equipment is very well used. Many students are confident users of the internet.

173. The information and communication technology co-ordinator is new in the post and is developing the system for teaching and assessment. The departmental documentation shows the contribution needed from other departments and the assessment required. The leadership encourages cross-curricular teaching so that applications are realistic and closely associated with subject areas. A well-qualified committee shares the responsibility of development planning. New computers are now in use and plans exist to update others. Although the total number of computers in the school is below average, they are well deployed in the main information and communication technology rooms. Demonstration facilities, enabling whole classes to see one screen, are inadequate. Additional computers and new servers are needed to increase speed and improve facilities in departmental areas. There are three support staff who provide a variety of skills. A skills audit has been completed by staff and training has been provided by the co-ordinator for all teachers.
174. An assessment and monitoring system is in place but relies on National Curriculum levels provided by teachers who are not experienced in assessment of students' information and communication technology. Students have little knowledge of their progress in the subject due to irregular feedback from teachers and assessment that takes place mainly at the end of Key Stage 3. However, Year 11 students take a coursework test in word processing and desk top publishing in English. They take a test on spreadsheets in Maths.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

175. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is average. Reported teacher assessments for 1999 show attainment to be in line with national expectations. There has been a sharp improvement compared to previous years. Girls do much better than boys. Standards observed in lessons and in written work in Years 7 and 8 are also average but there is a significant increase in the rate of progress in Year 9. By the end of the key stage, higher attaining students write at good length in both French and German on a range of personal topics. In German they speak accurately and with good pronunciation. Oral standards are lower in French; inconsistent recall of basic vocabulary causes hesitancy and pronunciation and intonation are weak. Students in middle sets also write well. In describing daily routines they apply past, present and future tenses with acceptable accuracy. In a French lesson on leisure activities many students spoke accurately, with good pronunciation, and showed the ability to ask as well as answer questions and to give opinions. In top and middle sets, students know a good range of vocabulary, which supports good standards in reading and listening comprehension work. Students in lower sets, including those with special educational needs, produce satisfactory work. For example, they write descriptions of their home-town, using a limited range of structures but showing some ability to deal accurately with adjectives and verb forms. In most lessons there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Some of the best oral work is done by boys but in teacher assessments girls do better.
176. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results at the higher (A\*-C) grades for 1999 show that attainment in French is slightly below the national average but attainment in German is low. In both languages results declined slightly compared with 1998, reflecting the impact of unstable staffing for the subject for several years. In French, girls consistently do better than the national average for girls but the performance of boys has fallen significantly to be well below the national average for boys. In German, girls do better than boys but both perform at well below their respective national averages. Compared to other school subjects, results in French are below average and in German are well below. All candidates achieved a GCSE grade within the range A\*-G, indicating satisfactory progress by students of lower ability. Reading is the best-developed skill. More able candidates do least well in speaking, whereas for other students writing is the weakest skill. Standards in lessons and written work seen in Years 10 and 11 are better than expected on the basis of examination results and are probably improved because of the impact of new staff. In both languages higher and average attaining students write in appropriate tenses and with commendable accuracy, for instance to describe their local area or to give an account of a holiday, with a well-developed feel for sentence structure in German. Oral standards are variable. Many students lack the confidence to speak fluently at length but they show a good level of competence in role-play. They continue to develop their knowledge of vocabulary and are able to understand the gist of what they hear and read in quite long passages in the foreign language. Lower attaining students work in small groups

towards a Certificate of Achievement course and respond well to imaginative tasks. Though their level of attainment is below expectations for their age, they are making satisfactory progress in the modified work set for them.

177. Results at GCE A-level have been at least in line with national averages over the last three years, with some students achieving grades A and B. In 1999 results were average for the small number of candidates. In lessons students in the upper sixth form are confident in their oral work. They understand long and complex passages of French and converse well with teachers, initiating as well as responding. In both oral and written work they show good knowledge of vocabulary and apply a suitable range of tense and structure. In their written work they build arguments well and draw conclusions effectively on an impressive variety of topics, from the role of the Royal Family to moral issues affecting their generation.
178. Attitudes to learning a modern foreign language are generally positive. Though take-up for studying two languages in Year 10 is poor and there are currently no students taking languages in Year 12, an encouraging number of students indicate that this situation will soon change. They are responding positively to lively teaching from a new team of teachers. There is very little unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons. Students take pride in the appearance of their work and organise their files well. They appreciate the good performance and effort of classmates and work sensibly with a variety of partners in role plays and surveys. In general they sustain attention well during the sixty minute lesson. Where attitudes are less positive, in Key Stage 4, it is usually a reaction to their experience in having to cope with fluctuations in teaching personnel and styles over several years. In these cases there is a noticeable lack of volunteers to contribute to oral classwork.
179. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and in the sixth form is very good. Teachers use the foreign language consistently to conduct their lessons, providing good models for students and constantly challenging them. They have good knowledge of the National Curriculum and of examination criteria, which they use well to ensure that students acquire appropriate techniques for gaining marks. They introduce and consolidate vocabulary and structures effectively, enabling students to make good progress in the basic skills of the subject. Most lessons are well planned to include several activities covering different attainment targets, which are conducted at a brisk pace and fully engage students' attention. In every lesson students revise previous work and learn something new. Good strategies include effective learning through games and the rotation of partners in oral work, for instance in a Year 9 French lesson to a mixed ability group learning to talk about leisure activities. In such lessons teachers manage students easily because they are absorbed in their work. Activities provide appropriate challenge for most students. However, there are no strategies for extending the range of activities to provide more focused support for students with special educational needs, or to extend the more able students within sets. This is particularly evident in Year 7 lessons, where all groups are of mixed ability and there is some non-specialist teaching which, though satisfactory, does not sufficiently accelerate the learning of able linguists. Though teachers themselves use French or German throughout lessons, there is a marked lack of insistence on students doing likewise, so that their use of English to seek help or to deal with other routine situations slows down their oral progress. Teachers make good use of resources, such as reading schemes, video and foreign language assistants for both languages, so that learning is enhanced by the variety of experiences over a sequence of lessons. Teachers could make more imaginative use of overhead projectors and need to improve the consistency in opportunities for using computers to assist learning. Students' work is marked and returned quickly and teachers often add comments which are designed to improve future learning, though there is some inconsistency in doing this. Homework is set regularly and complements work done in class.
180. All students learn a modern language in Key Stages 3 and 4. In Years 8 and 9 about sixty of the more able students take both languages and can continue with both in Key Stage 4, so that curricular provision is good. Attitudes and standards are both improving and this reflects the efforts of a team of new staff who are being led effectively and thoughtfully by their head of department. The team makes good use of regular meetings to evaluate and improve learning opportunities. The work of the department is monitored through these meetings but also through observations of each other's lessons, sampling of students' work and professional development interviews conducted by the head of department. There are good strategies for mentoring non-specialist teachers and for guiding foreign language assistants in their work. Assessment procedures are good and a start has been made in involving students more closely in the assessment of their work, for instance through target setting in Year 11 and opportunities for ongoing self-assessment in students' 'Franco Files'. As a result, many students can say how well they are doing and know what they must do to improve. Accommodation is good in a discrete block that provides each teacher with a personal base, good

storage and a separate room to which foreign language assistants withdraw students for conversation work. Display and decoration enhance a strong learning environment. Though money made available to the department has been used efficiently, there is a shortage of textbooks overall; sometimes students have to share books.

181. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Significant features that impact on standards of attainment include improved use of the foreign language by teachers. Improvement is clearly identifiable in the work of students in middle sets where there is better preparation for lessons with greater adherence to schemes of work. Subject leadership has improved from efficient to effective; and better procedures for assessment and the use of assessment data are now in place. Priorities for the future include improvement in development planning and schemes of work to include strategies for students' use of the foreign language in lessons; earlier extension of more able students, especially in writing; and more definite guidance on matching work to the abilities of students. There should be more consistency in marking and in providing students with opportunities to use computers.

## **MUSIC**

182. Teacher assessments made in 1999 indicate that the majority of students attained at the national average or above at the end of Key Stage 3. However, evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that all Year 9 students are below average, inferring that teacher assessments were too high. Students' performing and composing skills are below expectation for their ages. Year 9 students' compositions inspired by pictures are brief and do not show sufficient development of ideas. Their creativity in composing is often limited by insecure performing skills. Occasionally, instrumentalists are seen using their performing skills well in lessons. Often, as in a Year 7 lesson on rhythm, the more musically able students underachieve in relation to their levels of musical expertise. Students have good listening and appraising skills. Year 9 students offer constructive comments when appraising each other's compositions, which reflects good listening skills. Students have only scant knowledge of music of different times and places. Year 9 students' knowledge of western classical music is limited to naming a few composers and pieces. They have little insight into the music of other cultures.
183. GCSE examination results in recent years have been above the national average. Students achieve similar standards in lessons. Year 11 students demonstrate good performing and composing skills when developing their compositions. They also use music technology well to enhance their compositions.
184. A-level results are good, though the numbers taking the examination are too low to warrant comparison with national averages. Standards in lessons are good, and in some instances, very good. Students in both year groups use music computers and sophisticated recording equipment competently to support their practical work. They produce convincing compositions in a wide range of styles, including rock.
185. Standards at Key Stage 3 are lower than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Standards at GCSE and A-level are similar.
186. Students receiving instrument tuition achieve satisfactory or better playing standards for the lengths of time they have been learning. Video recordings indicate that good musical standards are achieved in staged musical productions, which are supportively accompanied by student instrumental groups. The school also has a number of rock groups that perform to a good and, at best, excellent standard.
187. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Lessons include good opportunities for students to practise together in groups and then perform to their peers. Opportunities occur for more musically able students, such as instrumentalists, to use their performing expertise in lessons but tasks are not planned systematically to challenge them to the full extent of their musical capabilities. The great majority of Key Stage 3 students work productively in lessons and listen supportively to each other's performances. In lessons, learning is satisfactory, though scrutiny of written work clearly indicates unsatisfactory progress in a number of key aspects of the programmes of study over time. For example, there is little clear evidence of improvement in students' use of graphic or standard notations over the key stage. Written work reflects only limited gains in knowledge of music of different times and cultures and this is confirmed when talking to students.

188. Teaching in Key Stage 4 GCSE classes is good. Targets agreed with students are relevant to their different needs. Good discussion between teacher and individuals promotes good learning. As a result, students make good progress in developing their practical work.
189. The quality of teaching in the very small A-level groups is good and at best very good. The in-depth discussions that take place between students and teacher enable students to refine their work effectively. Very good knowledge of music technology on the part of both teacher and students allows discussion at a very sophisticated level. The resulting learning is very good. Students in GCSE and A-level examination classes are well motivated and sustain good levels of concentration on tasks without the supervision of the teacher.
190. The quality of instrumental teaching is good and includes very good teaching strategies. Students are keen to improve and make good progress in developing their technical and interpretative skills in lessons. The quality of teaching in extra-curricular activities is good. At best, high expectation and good attention to detail result in very good improvements in instrumentalists' and singers' performing standards. Standards in the annual musical productions reflect high levels of commitment from students.
191. The department is not meeting statutory requirements for National Curriculum music at Key Stage 3. The scheme of work lacks the detail necessary to support delivery of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. No evidence is available to support the teacher assessments made on Year 9 students' achievements in relation to end of key stage descriptions in 1999. For GCSE and A-level examination classes, useful notes kept on individual students' achievements in different activities provide a useful basis for determining subsequent teaching.
192. The extra-curricular activities organised for instrumentalists are appropriate for their playing standards. The separate brass group and chamber orchestra allow suitable repertoire to be selected for both groups of players. The only singing group that rehearses regularly comprises mostly Year 7 students and no choral activities regularly take place that attract older students. Annual musical productions, formal concerts and Presentation Evenings provide satisfactory opportunities for experienced instrumentalists and singers to perform but too few opportunities exist for younger students to perform before audiences in less formal situations, apart from in lessons.
193. Management of the department is poor. A number of the issues identified for development in the department's action plans in recent years have not been tackled effectively. Some of these issues, including the fact that statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 music were not being met, were identified in the previous inspection. The lack of progress made in tackling them is a major factor in students' failing to reach standards in line with national expectation by the end of Key Stage 3.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

194. In July 1999 the school entered 66 students for the GCSE in physical education; 100 per cent of those entered gained A\* to G grades and 62 per cent gained A\* to C grades. This is significantly better than pass rates for similar schools. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is average and reflects teachers' assessments. Students perform well across a wide range of physical activities. Students are confident and versatile in their movements and are generally attentive listeners. They work hard and with determination to consolidate skills and assimilate new techniques. In games activities students are confident performers and display a range of skills which are generally performed with accuracy and understanding. The overall attainment of Key Stage 4 students is also in line with expectations, with a few students, particularly those in the examination groups, achieving a higher standard. Good levels of skills development are clearly evident in a wide variety of activities. Many of the school teams take part in inter-school matches and gain much success, with some winning local and county competitions. A number of the school's students have represented Bracknell Forest and Berkshire. A few students have gained international honours.
195. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, with all lessons observed being at least satisfactory and some of them good. Some very good teaching of rugby union was observed. Teachers have a good command of the subject and provide clear demonstrations and explanations in their lessons. The choice of content ensures that students generally sustain interest and involvement for whole lessons. There is an expectation by the teachers that students will work hard and behave well and usually these expectations are met. The teachers are energetic and enthusiastic about the subject and they are able to pass this on to their students. They place much appropriate emphasis on the safety aspect of the subject, resulting in the students' handling equipment with care and showing a concern for their safety and the safety of others. Most students arrive in school with only a limited experience of dance but quickly respond to enthusiastic teaching. By the end of the key stage, they are able to take responsibility for the development and choreography of a story line which is then often performed with fluency and control. In health related education, students are now attaining an understanding of fitness issues and practices, with students understanding the need for warming up effectively and putting this knowledge into practice at the beginning of each lesson. Teachers are encouraging the students to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their work but in order to meet National Curriculum requirements this is an aspect of their work that needs developing. Teachers show a care and concern for their students whilst encouraging the best of fair play, co-operation and competitive experiences.
196. Since the last inspection there has been a revision of the curriculum that is on offer. There is now much better balance of the time allocated to games, dance and gymnastics. Comprehensive schemes of work for all activities are now in place. In September 1997 the school began offering its Key Stage 4 students the opportunity to take a GCSE examination in the subject and since September 1999 students in the sixth form have been able to take an A-level. The procedures for assessing and recording the progress of the students have been revised and they are now in line with school policy and statutory requirements. These procedures are enhanced by a good pupil self-assessment component. Many teachers, including many non-specialists, give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of after school games and clubs, which are very well supported by enthusiastic students. The accommodation for the subject, which is shared by members of the local community, is of a high quality and has a very positive effect on the attainment of the students, although the floor of the gymnasium is in need of attention. The time allocation for the subject is good.
197. This is a well-led department. Documentation in all aspects is extensive and well presented. The staff who teach physical education work well together, support each other and show a very strong commitment to the students. Students have good attitudes to the subject. They are keen and motivated and have good relationships with their peers and their teachers.
198. Since the last report considerable improvement has been made to the balance of the curriculum, the overall standard of teaching and the range of public examinations in the subject which the students are able to take. This has combined to have a positive effect on the attainment of the students.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

199. The majority of students at the end of Key Stage 3 attain above average standards as outlined in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The students have a good general knowledge and understanding of several world religions, including Christianity, and they can understand and use special religious language and concepts in a meaningful way. They have a good comprehension of what it means to be religious and they can talk meaningfully about a range of issues, such as rituals, that occur within religions.
200. Attainment of those students who take GCSE is above the national standards as 63 per cent received A\*-C grades in 1999. The attainment of the students in the work seen in the classes and in their books is above the standards indicated in the examination syllabus. They are particularly good at reflecting on and expressing opinions about the religious and moral issues they are studying.
201. The standards of attainment at A-level are above the national average. Of the nine students entered, four received A grades. Of the work seen in classes, the standards of attainment are above the standards expected at this key stage. The students are particularly good in expressing opinions from more than one point of view. There is insufficient evidence to comment on the standards of religious education in the non-examination classes as none were seen during the inspection and there is no written work on which judgements can be based. These represent about 70 per cent and 90 per cent respectively of the numbers of students in these key stages.
202. Across the key stages students' specific knowledge of the belief systems which underpin the various moral and social issues which they study is not as strong as their knowledge and understanding of the issues themselves. Their attainment is stronger in learning about religions than it is in being able to relate their knowledge and understanding to their own immediate lives and experiences. The attainment of students identified as needing support because of special educational needs is good as the department is aware of their requirements and plans work accordingly. There is a noticeable difference in the attainment of boys and girls, the latter making far greater progress.
203. The teaching at Key Stage 3 is good in the majority of lessons and very good in the rest. The teachers are confident in the subject matter and lessons have clear direction and purpose. The students respond accordingly and there is a distinct acquisition of new knowledge and skills. A wide range of teaching methods is used and these suitably engage the students in their work. The objectives of the lesson are clear, though these could be more wide ranging if drawn from the Agreed Syllabus. This would enable the students to develop a richer and more varied appreciation of the aspects of the religions they are studying. The teaching of GCSE at Key Stage 4 is good in all lessons. The students are challenged and inspired to think about many topics, which include several moral and social issues, and the students engage themselves enthusiastically in the tasks and activities set before them. The teaching of A-level in the sixth form is very good. The students are encouraged to make decisions for themselves on complex philosophical issues and innovative strategies, such as role reversal, are often used to make the learning interesting and memorable. Across the key stages, additional strengthening of the religious content of the lessons would enhance students' general attainment and progress, as would an increase in pace. The students also need to be encouraged to give more personal responses to specifically religious issues and to reflect on how the teachings of religions might clarify the meaning of significant experiences in their own lives. Homework is regularly set and some work enables students with differing abilities to have a positive learning experience, though this has potential to be developed still further.
204. The attitudes and behaviour of the students at all Key Stages is good in about half of the lessons and very good in the rest; occasionally it is satisfactory when some students are passive due to too much teacher input. Otherwise the students show an interest in what they are doing and actively engage themselves in the lessons. They concentrate well and in the main are able to maintain this concentration. They are well behaved and polite and they respect both other people and their points of view. Their written work is of a good quality and they take care in the presentation of their work. There is a significant uptake of students wishing to take the GCSE examination in religious studies and at Advanced Level, though, as yet, there are more girls than boys; however, there has been some change to this recently.
205. The department is well managed and has two specialist full time staff. The documentation is very good but would benefit from more explicit connection to the Agreed Syllabus and more detail on skills and attitudes. The Agreed Syllabus is being implemented at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, the

70 per cent of students who do not study for the GCSE examination course only receive about 6 hours of religious education per year. The recommendation of the Agreed Syllabus is 40 hours per year; there is insufficient time to deliver the statutory requirements of the Syllabus to this very large group of students. Sixteen non-specialist staff teach this group of students and this is unsatisfactory. The statutory requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are not being taught in the sixth form. There has been no progress on the issue of time since the last inspection. No other significant issues were raised at the last inspection. Monitoring the teaching and assessment of religious education of the non-examination classes in line with the Agreed Syllabus would ensure more rigorous learning in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The department uses information and communication technology in accordance with school policy. The department makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of school life in its study of world religions and it makes a good contribution to the standards of literacy in the school with its introduction and explanation of new words and phrases. The department has insufficient storage space and insufficient text books. Both religious education rooms are attractively and appropriately decorated.

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION**

206. Students achieve GCSE results that are above the national average. There has been good improvement over the past four years. Students achieve above the national average in the GNVQ course at age 16. Both these sets of results indicate the department is providing well-structured courses with effective teaching. Students taking the GCSE course have a satisfactory understanding of such concepts as sole trader, a limited company and pressure groups. They know several examples of primary, secondary and tertiary industries, although their knowledge is not very extensive. The quality of learning demonstrated through many of the students work-related assignments is good. The assignments are well structured, with suitable questionnaires for a sample of employees, giving a good basis for understanding. Students taking the Certificate of Achievement have an early understanding of how to set up a business. They recognise some of the effects of a large new store moving into a town's main street, for example.
207. Students taking economics A-level are on course to gain broadly average results for the course, with all students expected to achieve a pass grade. Several students have a good understanding of the central problem of economic societies, the theories of supply and demand and relationships involving output or money supply. Short tests reveal that several detailed points about the relationships are not yet secure, the teacher using these opportunities well to reinforce learning.
208. Students make sound progress and acquire appropriate learning skills at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs make sound progress towards the Certificate of Achievement. Most students show good application to the tasks, are interested and work hard to produce a good result. A few of the lower attaining students have less concentration and their written work is often poorly presented. The coursework is highly relevant to the students, being practical and adapted to their own interests. The written assignments particularly, following work-related visits, indicate a good range of experiences and quality of learning that have a positive effect on standards. Lessons proceed with a good sense of purpose at most times, although a few students in Key Stage 4 lack personal application. The majority of students are well behaved.
209. The quality of teaching is good at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The teachers' good subject knowledge shows through their clear exposition and good understanding of students' difficulties. The subject planning is well structured, with a choice of task that promotes good interest and effort. Teachers have good relationships with the students, helping to motivate and interest them. The teachers use an appropriate range of skills and methods, providing challenge and variety. The questioning style is focused on significant points, although these are more usually for factual answers rather than for an explanation. Assessments within lessons are used well to give direct feedback to the students, and the department has appropriate assessment procedures in place.
210. The head of department provides good leadership for the development of the subject, with a clear action plan that is helping to manage improvements. Suitable courses are offered to match the students' needs and interests, with a good practical or work-based element. The department makes good use of available information and communication technology resources. Homework is set and marked regularly, helping to monitor progress. There is a broad range of ability in several groups

that requires particular effort by the teachers to maintain progress by all students. Overall, the subject makes a useful contribution to the school's achievements and quality of provision.