

INSPECTION REPORT

DESBOROUGH SCHOOL

MAIDENHEAD

LEA area: Windsor and Maidenhead

Unique reference number: 110099

Headteacher: Mr D W D Eyre

Reporting inspector: Mr D Pittman
16976

Dates of inspection: 8-12 May 2000

Inspection number: 186002

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A D Harding
Date of previous inspection:	18 September 1995

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			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Joy Buncher	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Graeme Clarke	Team inspector	Design and technology	
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Peter Gilliat	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Vincent Gormally	Team inspector	Art	
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Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern languages	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Desborough is an average-sized comprehensive school of 1032 boys, aged 11 to 18. The number on roll has increased by a fifth in recent years. The majority of pupils are from relatively favoured backgrounds. Almost a fifth of pupils have English as an additional language; of these very few, however, are in the early stage of learning English. A quarter of pupils (above the national average) have been identified as having special educational needs. 1.6 per cent of pupils (below the national average) have statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The overall attainment of boys on entry to the school, at age 11, is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Desborough is a very good school, which is significantly over-subscribed. It promotes the 'traditional values' of integrity, discipline and fair play; in all these areas the school is very effective. There is a purposeful and strong leadership, with a vision that has led a commitment to improvement and raising standards. The quality of teaching is good, and particularly effective in Years 10 and 11. The staff create an enthusiastic, supportive climate for learning, which promotes high standards of achievement. The school provides very good value for money. A significant feature is the range of extra-curricular activities and events provided by the school to promote the personal and social development of its pupils.

What the school does well

- The high standards at Key Stages 3 and 4, particularly in modern foreign languages. The high standards in advanced GNVQ business studies.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher and the effective support of the senior management team.
- The good and often very good quality of teaching.
- The enthusiasm of the boys, their very good behaviour and keen interest in their lessons
- The very good provision of extra-curricular activities particularly in sport, residential trips and musical performances.
- The mutual respect and shared sense of purpose amongst pupils and staff.
- The excellent social development of boys.

What could be improved

- Standards in music at Key Stage 3; GCSE performance in design and technology; A level achievement in geography.
- Unsatisfactory curriculum arrangements for information and communication technology in consistency of assessment in this subject, and inadequate standards in examinations at Key Stage 4.
- The quality of accommodation, particularly in English, science, modern foreign languages, music and physical education.
- Overall levels of resources and in particular the provision of computers, equipment in physical education, and learning resources for geography and music.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good and sufficient progress since the last inspection in 1995. Teaching has improved significantly, and achievement is now good in most subjects at all key stages. Attainment in science, modern foreign languages and religious education has improved. GCSE performance has risen since the last inspection: standards are now well above national averages at Key Stage 4. Standards in the core subjects at Key Stage 3 are also well above national averages.

The school has successfully addressed most of the issues raised in the last inspection report. Setting

arrangements have been appropriately reviewed to provide a more coherent pattern of grouping by attainment. The quality of provision and the teaching in the personal and social education course have improved as the result of in-service training and the appointment of a co-ordinator. An effective strategy for target setting and a consistent assessment policy are helping to raise pupils' expectations of themselves, and levels of attainment. The senior management team has been re-structured to promote more efficient and regular monitoring of the school's work. The role of curriculum leaders is now more sharply focussed on monitoring and improving the quality of teaching. The installation of networking facilities for information and communication technology has extended learning opportunities, but there is still insufficient use of computers in some subjects. A tight financial budget has been managed well, although there are resource deficiencies in some subjects. The curriculum has improved, through the provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11, but the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is still not met, and there is still no religious education in the sixth form. The unsuitability of some of the accommodation remains a serious issue for the school although the drama facilities have recently been improved significantly.

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
GCSE examinations	B	B	A	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	C	

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

Results in the national tests for 14 year olds have been consistently well above the national averages for boys in English, mathematics and science, although there was a dip in attainment in English in 1999. In the 1999 tests, in comparison with the performance of pupils in similar schools, attainment in science was well above average, in mathematics it was above average, but in English it was well below. Between 1996 and 1999, the overall trend in performance in the core subjects was below the national pattern

GCSE results for boys gaining five or more A*- C grades are well above the national average for boys, and show a rising trend over the five years 1994-1999. In the broader grade range of A*-G, attainment is again well above average. In 1999 the school target for pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades was reached. GCSE achievement is in line with the performance of pupils in similar schools.

Attainment in the 1999 A level examinations was in line with national averages and just above the average for boys in all maintained schools. The trend in performance between 1996 and 1999 was in line with the national picture. Attainment in the advanced GNVQ business studies course is significantly above average,

In lessons and written and other work, attainment in mathematics and science is well above national expectations. In most other subjects attainment is above expectations at both key stages, and at Key Stage 4 attainment in English, modern foreign languages, physical education and art is well above expectations. Attainment is in line with expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4 in geography and design and technology. Attainment is below expectations in music at Key Stage 3, and in geography in the sixth form. Boys make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Boys' attitudes at both key stages are very positive. They show an enthusiastic response in many lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons is very good; pupils respect the teachers, and work well. Pupils are orderly and considerate of others outside lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships at all levels are excellent; boys are encouraged to take responsibility, which develops their self-esteem and confidence.
Attendance	Attendance is very good.

These positive attitudes and levels of commitment support good working relationships. Co-operation and competition are promoted effectively.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons. It was excellent or very good in 29 per cent and good in a further 44 per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in a very small number of lessons.

Teachers' good subject knowledge and effective planning provide very good opportunities for boys to learn. The quality of teaching in science, modern foreign languages and art is very good. The quality of teaching in mathematics and English is good at both key stages. The effective management of pupils and their positive rapport with staff are conducive to productive learning. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is good. Pupils develop good skills in physical education and art. In some lessons in geography and information and communication technology there is too much direction by the teacher, which stifles independent learning. However, the quality of pupils' learning in most lessons is good. Most boys apply themselves conscientiously to learning new skills, and generally work hard.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Provision is good. There is a good range of subjects with a particular strength in the very good opportunities for extra-curricular work.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good and enables all pupils including those with specific learning difficulties, to make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are given good support and show increasing levels of confidence.
Provision for pupils' personal development,	Provision for the social development of boys is excellent. They are encouraged to assume responsibility and become good citizens. They

including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	show honesty, and a mutual respect for one another and adults in the school community. They are encouraged to appreciate cultures beyond their own. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Boys are well supported and given good educational guidance. Periodic reviews are particularly helpful in setting targets for them.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all respects apart from the provision for information and communication technology across the key stages and religious education in the sixth form. The participation rates in clubs and activities are very good. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and statutory requirements for pupils with special educational needs are met.

There are good opportunities for boys to show initiative through the school council, the prefect system, the 'train users' group and police liaison group. Sixth form students take part in community service and are given responsibilities for the learning of others by conducting oral tests in modern foreign languages and in peer-led drugs education with Year 8 pupils, which works very successfully.

Pupils' academic and personal development is very good, and well monitored by form tutors and heads of year. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating anti-social behaviour are very effective. This helps pupils to make good progress in lessons. Good discipline in classrooms and effective rewards for good behaviour encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and develop personal integrity.

Reports to parents give a good overview of general performance and academic achievement.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher effectively leads by example and provides a very clear educational direction. There is good support from other management staff, which promotes a good team ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors take a keen and informed interest in the school's work. They take a full part in forward planning and fulfil most of their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Effective evaluation through direct observation and review has improved the overall quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are efficiently deployed through effective planning and a good analysis of educational priorities.

The aims of the school are clearly expressed and effectively exemplified in its day-to-day activities.

Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through their committee structure, presentations from staff and training programmes. The governing body does not satisfy statutory requirements in relation to the provision for information and communication technology, religious education in the sixth form and a daily act of collective worship. The annual report covers all requirements.

Subject areas are efficiently co-ordinated and heads of year are effectively involved in monitoring the academic progress of pupils. A particular strength amongst the staff is the shared commitment to improvement and a willingness to evaluate their work systematically.

The accommodation is unsatisfactory and has a limiting effect on pupils' progress and standards of attainment. Accommodation is particularly poor in English, music, science, physical education and

modern foreign languages. The provision for information and communication technology has improved, but still does not adequately reflect curriculum requirements. The general level of resourcing for departments is low, being constrained by a tight budget. The shortage of resources is having a negative impact in geography and music.

The school very effectively monitors and evaluates its financial decisions to ensure that the principles of 'best value' are applied. Excellent use is made of new technology to enable the smooth running of the school and ensure efficient administration.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good teaching, which is linked to high expectations and good progress. • The approachability of staff. • The good leadership reflected in the support and concern of staff. • The maturity and sense of responsibility shown by boys. • The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework being set.

Parents are very supportive of the school and value the work it is doing for their sons. This view was expressed consistently at the parents' meeting held before the inspection and in responses to the questionnaire. The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by parents. On the issue of homework, the school's schedule and the evidence of the inspection indicate that homework tasks are sufficiently regular and challenging to promote satisfactory learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The school takes boys with the full range of ability but in general standards of attainment are above average on entry. This is evident from pupils' National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 and assessments of pupils' potential when they join the school.

2. Results in the national tests for 14-year-olds have been consistently well above the national average for boys in English, mathematics and science, although there was a dip in attainment in English in 1999. In comparison with performance in similar schools attainment in science in 1999 was well above average, in mathematics it was above average but in English it was well below. The overall trend in Key Stage 3 performance in the core subjects between 1996 and 1999 was below the national pattern

3. GCSE results in 1999 for boys gaining five or more A*-C grades were well above the national average, and have shown a rising trend since 1995. In the broader range of A*-G, attainment was again well above average. The standards of attainment in the GCSE examinations for English, mathematics and science were well above the national averages for boys. Examination performance was particularly strong in French, German, art and design, mathematics and English literature. The results in physical education, information and communication technology and design and technology were weaker than in other subjects. In comparison with similar schools overall performance at GCSE is in line with national standards.

4. Attainment in the 1999 A level examinations was in line with national averages and just above the average for boys in all maintained schools. The school does not enter students for the general studies examination, and in consequence the average points score is depressed when compared with other schools. The trend in performance between 1995 and 1999 has been in line with the national picture. Attainment in the GNVQ business studies course is significantly above average,

5. The school has exceeded its targets for GCSE performance. In 1999, the school target for pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades was 58 per cent; 59 per cent was achieved. The school's current targets are sufficiently challenging to reflect the ability and potential of boys in the school.

Standards seen during the inspection

6. In lessons, written and other work, overall attainment in mathematics and science is well above national expectations. In most other subjects, attainment is above expectations and at Key Stage 4, attainment in English, modern foreign languages, physical education and art is well above expectations. Attainment is in line with expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4 in geography and design and technology. Attainment is below national expectations in music at Key Stage 3, in design and technology at Key Stage 4 and in geography in the sixth form.

7. In lessons, written and other work, standards in English at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the standards expected of boys. They speak confidently and articulately, and those of higher attainment have a wide vocabulary; pupils with special educational needs

communicate meaning clearly. Listening skills develop well. By this stage reading comprehension is good or very good. Over the key stage pupils become proficient in a range of writing styles, The support given to lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is very effective in improving the accuracy of their work. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are well above the national expectation for boys. Oral skills continue to develop very well. Pupils listen constructively to each other and to the teacher. Boys with English as an additional language contribute well but are hampered in expressing their opinions fully by a relatively narrow vocabulary. In writing, pupils increasingly achieve high standards using a wide vocabulary and developing logical arguments. In the sixth form, standards of discussion are high. Students produce well-structured writing.

8. Pupils' literacy skills are good. Higher-attaining boys in geography make thoughtful contributions to class discussion. In other lessons while most boys contribute confidently to discussion, a few are reluctant to join in. Listening skills are well developed. Overall standards of reading comprehension are high: most pupils are confident and competent readers, though some pupils with special educational needs are less secure. In history, boys meet their teachers' high expectations of good work in selecting, summarising and synthesising information. Standards of fluency and accuracy in writing are at least satisfactory and often good. There are examples of good extended writing in geography, and in religious education, where pupils at both key stages often express personal views clearly and sensitively. In physical education at Key Stage 4, though the range of styles is relatively limited, writing is expressive and accurate. For lower-attaining boys, sentence structure improves at Key Stage 4. Specialist terms are well used in the sixth form. Key technical terms are often displayed in most classrooms and the use of information and communication technology contributes to accuracy in writing. Pupils with special educational needs are helped to structure their work through the use of writing frames. In science the teaching of literacy is particularly well developed and contributes significantly to standards of attainment in the subject.

9. In mathematics lessons, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is well above national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils have good algebraic skills, understand the principles of probability and can find the area of complex geometrical shapes. Average-attaining pupils can use statistical graphs to illustrate data correctly. Lower-set pupils generally have satisfactory basic mental and written number skills and can use calculators effectively. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is well above national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of some GCE A level questions involving algebra and co-ordinate geometry. Average-attaining pupils are confident in using algebraic and geometrical ideas such as ratio, similar triangles and probability. Some lower-attaining pupils are less confident in their understanding of these ideas. Students' attainment in the A level course is above expectations. They form a good theoretical base to their learning and usually apply these ideas correctly.

10. In general, pupils use numeracy skills effectively to support their work in subjects across the curriculum. There is particularly good use in science where teachers take trouble to give direct attention to making sense of graphical information, handling number with and without calculators and measuring accurately. In geography, numeracy skills are integrated successfully into the work in many topics, but pupils' skills in some aspects of graphical presentation and analysis of statistical data are less secure. Pupils' measuring skills in design and technology are under-developed because teachers give insufficient attention to precision in the work in graphics and in making artefacts, but they have a secure grasp of

graphical methods in information and communication technology. Pupils are competent in numerical and graphical work in religious education.

11. The well above average standards of attainment in national science tests is reflected in pupils' work at Key Stage 3. They are able to conduct experiments such as the use of basic circuitry to form a 'buzzer system'. Pupils collect data accurately and can draw scientific inferences from this information. Knowledge and understanding improve through successive key stages. In Years 10 and 11 pupils show confidence in their use of complex ideas such as a chemical 'mol' and issues relating to genetic engineering. Standards of attainment have improved significantly at Key Stage 4. Attainment at A level matches and often exceeds national expectations.

12. Boys' achievements, overall, given their prior attainment, are predominately good at all key stages. Pupils do well in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, art, and physical education; in all of these subjects pupils sustain good improvement in their knowledge and understanding. There is clear 'added value' in pupils' learning. In history and religious education pupils also make good progress. Achievement in music and information and communication technology is generally satisfactory. In geography, pupils' achievement lacks consistency; progress is good from Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4, but falls away in the sixth form to become unsatisfactory.

13. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys from ethnic backgrounds; they progress as well as other pupils. At all stages higher-attaining pupils make good progress.

14. During Key Stage 3, pupils with special educational needs make rapid gains in their literacy skills. In 1996, 37 pupils entered the school with reading ages two years or more behind their chronological age. This degree of weakness seriously compromises pupils' ability to cope with the secondary school curriculum. When this group of pupils started Key Stage 4, almost all had advanced their reading age by three to four years. This improvement in literacy forms the basis for very good progress in their other subjects and results in pupils attaining higher standards than are indicated by their attainment on entry. In 1999, over 40 pupils who had entered the school requiring specialist help with literacy achieved an average of eight GCSE pass grades. Pupils with statements of special educational need, which specified 'moderate learning difficulties', all obtained at least four GCSE passes.

15. Generally, in relation to boys' prior attainment, there is good added value to their progress, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are one of the many strengths of the school. Most pupils have very positive attitudes and are eager to respond and become involved. They enjoy school. Pupils endorse the school's values and take full advantage of the opportunities offered, within and beyond taught lessons. The school promotes a traditional ethos – respect and integrity. It sets clear guidelines for pupils to follow. School uniform is wholly adhered to, which parents feel helps to establish group identity and personal respect. Increased links with the sister school provide good experience in liaison and co-operation.

17. Behaviour is mostly very good and is always at least good, both in lessons and around school. Most parents say behaviour is good. Pupils behave well at lunchtime and talk to each other sociably. They are considerate to each other. Behaviour on the playground is also very good. The school tries hard not to exclude pupils. There were 35 exclusions during the last reporting year, three of which were permanent. There is a limited amount of bullying, which is dealt with quickly and effectively by the staff. Achievement badges are valued by the younger pupils and can be awarded for good behaviour as well as academic work.

18. Relationships are excellent. Pupils form constructive relationships with each other and with teachers. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust. Teachers know pupils well and enjoy working with them. Pupils value one another's opinions, which they listen to attentively. Independent reflection is evident.

19. There are many opportunities for personal development, which are excellent at all levels. Year 7 pupils prepare breakfast for other pupils and others take on responsibility as members of the school council or as prefects in the sixth form. There are also opportunities for pupils to extend their cultural and social interests through a range of extra-curricular and social interests, for example visiting World War 1 battlefields, taking part in sport or public speaking.

20. Pupils from ethnic minorities are well integrated into all the activities in the school.

21. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs to all aspects of school life are very good. Pupils and their parents accept the recognition of learning difficulties without embarrassment and welcome the help and support provided. Pupils are actively involved in monitoring their own progress and take evident pleasure in success. Hard work and determination to overcome difficulties are outstanding characteristics of these pupils. Many give up their recreational time in order to attend extra lessons.

22. The behaviour of pupils with special educational needs observed in withdrawal groups is always exemplary. In mainstream classes, when the lessons are well structured and they are provided with appropriate work, their behaviour matches the very good standards observed in all pupils. Pupils are very tolerant of one another's weaknesses, and mainstream peers consistently show patience and understanding. These constructive relationships, which are skilfully fostered by teachers, contribute much to the high standards of behaviour evident in the school.

23. Particular emphasis is given to the personal development of pupils with special educational needs. All make significant gains in social skills, study skills, personal confidence and the many other abilities that are necessary for independence both in the mainstream school and adult life.

24. Attendance is very good and above the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. Registers are marked efficiently and quickly. There is little lateness and lessons start on time. Parents say pupils are keen to go to school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. Teaching is a strength of the school. It is good or better in almost three out of four lessons; 29 per cent of all lessons are of a very good standard or excellent. Almost all lessons (98 per cent) are satisfactory; there is a very small amount of unsatisfactory

teaching. Teaching is consistently good through all key stages.

26. A number of features contribute to the good teaching. Classroom management and control are very good; all teachers establish a good rapport with pupils and use encouragement to motivate them. There is often a crisp pace through lessons and limited resources are used well to promote pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge; this is used well in art and English to motivate and interest pupils. In many subjects such as mathematics and science, the teachers' enthusiasm promotes a positive climate for learning. In French and German, expertise is used very effectively to teach almost all of the lessons in the target language. This practice ensures that pupils concentrate hard and develop their own awareness and understanding of the language. In music lessons the instrumental expertise of the staff provides a good basis for boys to appreciate music. Teachers' knowledge and skills in information and communication technology are developing, but insufficient emphasis is given to its inclusion in lessons such as modelling and control in science. There are no general weaknesses in the teaching. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in some lessons is the result of low expectations, a failure to challenge pupils, and insufficient variety in learning activities.

27. There is very good planning through effective schemes of work in almost all subjects. This focuses successfully on coverage of National Curriculum requirements. However, there are weaknesses in planning in music at Key Stage 3 and in information and communication technology at both key stages. The teaching of basic skills is good at both key stages. Literacy and numeracy are reinforced at appropriate points through the use of technical vocabularies and data collection. Detailed planning is an effective feature of most lessons. This provides a clear structure and focus for lesson activities as, for example, in physical education and design and technology where skills are effectively developed. The high quality of planning leads to exciting and adventurous lessons. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson pupils were enthusiastically involved in a game that involved the identification of scientific 'keys'. Generally, the effectiveness of lesson planning ensures the good development of ideas and leads to sustained improvements in pupils' understanding.

28. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance. In modern foreign languages boys are set demanding tasks through a wide range of activities. This ensures good productivity and pace in lessons as well as promoting the right amount of intellectual effort. In science, challenging experimental tasks provide good opportunities for pupils to think for themselves. However, in some A level geography lessons there are low expectations of students and insufficient challenge to promote learning at appropriate levels. In general, there are good levels of productivity in most lessons and a good pace of learning.

29. The active involvement of pupils helps to sustain interest. Most teachers make good use of questioning technique to extend pupils' understanding. For example, in a sixth form history lesson, effective questioning guided the students' thinking to a more informed understanding of the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, in mathematics the use of structured questions leads to a sequential development of pupils' learning. In a Year 8 science lesson, the teacher effectively used the drama skills of pupils to encourage them to mime the behaviour of molecules. The lesson promoted creativity well. In some information and communication technology lessons there is too much direction and explanation by the teacher, which stifles independent learning.

30. Almost all teachers make effective use of a wide range of control and management strategies. The insistence on high standards of behaviour results in boys sustaining their concentration levels. The very positive relationships staff have with pupils create a good learning environment. This is drawn on to good effect in design and technology, where praise and encouragement are used well to give pupils confidence in the development of skills. In general, the good rapport staff have with the boys is a strength of the school and contributes significantly to the ethos of co-operation apparent in its day-to-day activities.

31. Most teachers use time and resources well. For example, most lessons are built around a time plan for activities, which effectively sustains their pace and productivity. In history and geography, local resources and field-trips are used well to develop pupils' interests and add relevance to their studies. Most subjects encourage boys to use the library and computer facilities to support their own independent work. However, the use of information and communication technology is inconsistent in lessons. This resource is used well in modern foreign languages and science, but insufficiently in art and geography. Most teachers plan for a summary or review session at the end of the lesson. This practice is effective in providing a context for pupils' learning, and works well.

32. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is good in most subjects. Progress is assessed well, and there is some self-assessment by pupils in history and art and by students in sixth form science lessons. The marking of pupils' work is up to date, and written praise is given to promote learning and understanding. In general, written comments are constructive and help pupils improve the quality of their work. Verbal praise, which motivates and sustains pupils' interest, is used frequently. Homework is well focused, involves research and is improving standards.

33. The teaching of individuals and small groups withdrawn to the special educational needs bases is always very good. It is characterised by tremendous teacher enthusiasm, which produces a quite remarkable response in pupils who work at great pace and intensity for the whole of each lesson. In-class support provided by learning support assistants is always very good and often excellent. Teachers and auxiliary staff work together as fellow professionals to create an effective learning environment for all the pupils in each supported class. Auxiliary staff take a particular responsibility for the support of pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The skill and commitment staff bring to this work are of great benefit to the pupils learning to control their behaviour and contribute much to the very good order evident in the school.

34. In most subjects, pupils with special educational needs are in small sets where work of suitable difficulty and challenge can be provided. All teachers show sensitivity to the problems experienced by pupils with special educational needs, and most are very skilled in providing good learning opportunities for pupils who have weak literacy skills and who struggle to retain knowledge. The support for pupils with special educational needs is never less than good and is particularly effective in modern foreign languages, science, English and mathematics.

35. The standard of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, with a greater emphasis on adding variety to teaching methods and concentrating attention on how boys learn. These strategies are having a positive impact on raising standards of attainment.

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

36. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for its pupils. At Key Stage 3, pupils are given enhanced opportunities beyond the National Curriculum through the provision of drama. At Key Stage 4, in addition to the required National Curriculum subjects, pupils have a wide choice from which to choose two further subjects. In the sixth form, the school offers a good range of A level subjects as well as GNVQ programmes in business studies. Statutory requirements are met except for the provision of religious education in the sixth form. In addition, the range of information and communication technology opportunities at Key Stages 3 and 4 does not yet fully meet statutory requirements. The school's flexible arrangements for grouping pupils for teaching purposes work well. They ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and help them make good progress in their lessons.

37. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Withdrawal for specialist teaching is carefully organised so that pupils' entitlement to the full National Curriculum is not compromised. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum has been carefully designed to meet special educational needs. The "Support Option " scheme, which is taken within the basic National Curriculum, provides many pupils with a Key Stage 4 course which is relevant, manageable and enjoyable. The care with which individual work in the special educational needs department is designed to support the curriculum is a strength of the school

38. Identification of pupils with special educational needs is thorough and detailed. Before entry, there is close co-operation with the contributory primary schools and a full range of reliable and valid tests is used. All teachers are given detailed information on individual pupils and professional guidance on meeting their needs. Classroom teachers and the pastoral staff, using a well-understood referral system, effectively identify needs which arise during a pupil's time at the school.

39. The special educational needs department constructs very thorough Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for pupils identified at Stage 2 and above. These are used as the basis for work within the department. The department also sets targets based on the IEPs, which are negotiated with each pupil and used to facilitate appropriate curriculum modification. These targets are becoming a most powerful influence both by motivating pupils and focusing teachers' attention on a pupil's problems.

40. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Over 50 per cent of the pupils take part in the wide range of extra-curricular sport offered by the school and supervised by a total of 17 staff. Pupils also have very good opportunities to participate in activities and productions involving music and drama. Many departments offer curricular clubs, revision sessions and educational visits. During the period of the inspection over 50 pupils were on a visit to the battlefields of the First World War.

41. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and for careers education and guidance is good. A well-planned PSHE course is provided for all pupils throughout the school, which includes health education, citizenship, sex education and issues of drugs misuse. The careers programme at Key Stage 4 enables all pupils to undertake one week's work experience in Year 11. The careers room and the learning

resources centre provide appropriate resources to help with individual career planning, and pupils have easy access to careers guidance through the school's careers officer.

42. Links with the community, which support pupils' learning, are very strong. The PSHE programme makes very good use of visiting speakers and outside agencies. The school is fully involved with the Maidenhead Education Business Partnership, and staff from local companies make a significant contribution to work in business studies. In the sixth form, the Understanding Industry programme involves a wide range of people from the business community. The school also has good links with partner institutions. Effective liaison with further and higher education institutions ensures a smooth transition from school to college. The school has productive links with Reading University over initial teacher training. Good collaboration with four other secondary schools in the town is being established to extend A level choice through joint provision of courses. Relationships with the large number of primary schools that send pupils to the school are good, although links concerning subject continuity are underdeveloped.

43. Since the last inspection the school has improved its arrangements for grouping pupils to ensure equality of access to the curriculum. Statutory requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4 are now met, although the school has yet to make adequate provision in the sixth form. Whilst provision for information and communication technology has improved further development is still needed to guarantee pupils' statutory entitlement.

44. The school's overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Spiritual development is still not as effectively promoted as the other aspects and the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Through the implementation of its aims the school encourages boys to be aware of spiritual needs and moral values and to respect all people.

45. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. In religious education, pupils make detailed studies of the major world religions and holy writings such as the Bible and Koran. In art the spiritual factor is stressed in the study of aboriginal art and the art of Georgia O'Keefe is studied as a spiritual experience. In a geography lesson pupils were treated to an awe-inspiring description of the dramatic eruption of Mount Vesuvius and its catastrophic effect on local inhabitants. In assemblies, though there may be a religious input, there are missed opportunities for reflection.

46. The school's provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school has a well-publicised Code of Conduct, which promotes the importance of respect for other people. Pupils examine moral issues through a good PSHE programme, and through discussion in lessons, for example in science - transplants and genetic modification - and in geography - conflict of land use in National Parks. In drama, improvisations and scripted performances are frequently based on conflicts within personal and group relationships. In physical education lessons pupils learn right from wrong in applying rules in games and accepting the word of the referee or umpire. Pupils involved in extra-curricular music activities have regularly raised money for charities including Scope, the Rotary Club and Swan Lifeline.

47. The school's provision for pupils' social development is excellent. There are good opportunities for pupils to show initiative through the school council, the prefect system, the 'train users' group and police liaison group. Sixth form students take part in community service and are given responsibilities for the learning of others by conducting oral tests in modern foreign languages and in peer-led drugs education with Year 8 pupils, which works very successfully. In addition to the many varied sporting and music activities, there is a

wide variety of other extra-curricular activities including the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, public speaking, residential geography fieldwork trips and a drama club – all of which make a valuable contribution to pupils' confidence. Pupils are encouraged to take part in competitions such as the magistrate's competition, fire safety, young consumers and Thames trains. There are many opportunities for collaborative work in science, mathematics, physical education, music, French and German lessons, that help to develop positive attitudes. In drama there is a particular emphasis on the need for pupils to work collaboratively in groups and with trust. Staff are good models of considerate and courteous behaviour and there is strong mutual respect between teachers and pupils.

48. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. In a broad range of subjects the school gives pupils good insights into the culture of this and other countries. Various visits are organised to the theatre, museums and art galleries. Through art, English, geography, history, mathematics, music, modern foreign languages and religious education pupils are given insights into the traditions of peoples across the world. Art lessons at Key Stage 3 include the study of tribal and ethnic art. In geography lessons pupils are able to study the lifestyles of the Masai and Kikuyu tribes in Kenya. Schemes of work in music include modules on Asian, African and Gamelan music. International sport is well used in French lessons to motivate boys.

49. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the French and German exchanges which take place regularly, and Year 12 and 13 students have the opportunity to do their work experience in France or Germany.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50. The warm, caring atmosphere that the school promotes at all levels is a tribute to its strong ethos of pastoral concern. The school cares very well for all its pupils. Teachers know individual pupils very well and work effectively to meet their pastoral and academic needs. The arrangements for monitoring and promoting regular attendance, good behaviour and personal development are very effective. Heads of year play an extremely competent and caring role in this. The school has very effective ways of eliminating oppressive behaviour so that pupils report that there is almost no bullying. Child protection procedures are well documented and are known by the staff. The deputy head is the nominated person with overall responsibility.

51. Pupils' academic and personal development is effectively monitored by form tutors and heads of year. Procedures are very good and give a detailed overview of progress and other achievements. Educational and personal support and guidance are good. Form tutors, supported by the senior management team and external agencies, provide good educational guidance.

52. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating anti-social behaviour are very effective. Good discipline in classrooms and effective rewards for good behaviour encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and develop personal integrity. This helps pupils to make good progress in lessons.

53. The school prospectus fulfils legal requirements for publishing school attendance data. Policy instructions for staff relating to attendance registers are included in the staff handbook. Subject teachers also keep attendance registers and follow up absences. Spot checks are used to monitor absenteeism; truancy is not a problem. Form tutors identify good and improved attendance in reports and contact parents if a boy has been absent for three days without explanation. The importance of punctuality is stressed and the names

of boys who are late are entered in the late book in the office. The Educational Welfare Officer visits weekly and deals effectively with any individuals who have attendance problems, but these are few. The registers are inspected regularly by the Educational Welfare Officer.

54. All parents or carers of pupils in Year 7 have signed a standard home/school agreement and it is intended that this should be done for all new pupils. The remaining year groups have signed other "old type" home/school agreements. They effectively clarify expectations on matters of attendance and discipline.

55. Pupils with special educational needs, who are fully integrated into tutor groups, enjoy the same very high standards of care and concern with general welfare that are provided for all pupils. In addition, the special educational needs staff and the pastoral system give considerable extra support to pupils whose circumstances can make it difficult for them to cope with the demands of life in a large and complex secondary school. When staffed, the special educational needs base provides a haven for pupils who may be experiencing problems in mainstream classes. Unfortunately the timetable and the limited accommodation prevent a full use of this dimension of provision.

56. The school has a concise policy on assessment, which clearly indicates the philosophy, purposes, outcomes and evaluation required to provide good practice. Departments are given considerable freedom to devise and implement their own assessment systems and grading of attainment criteria, which most have done successfully to meet National Curriculum and examination board requirements. Some departments such as music and information and communication technology have not yet identified assessment criteria accurately enough and need to provide firmer evidence for the awarding of effort and attainment grades. Pupils' comments indicate that they are able to understand the different systems in operation, which are reinforced periodically by departments. Marking and assessment of pupils' class and homework are done regularly and consistently by most departments and are monitored by the senior management team. Elements of pupil self-assessment are a feature in history, art and sixth form science. Detailed records are kept within departments and examples of pupils' work kept by most.

57. Data and information obtained from assessment are centrally stored. An 'assessment manager' system is being set up to provide more comprehensive record keeping and target grade information. On entry to the school, test results and information from contributory primary schools are used to place pupils in ability sets, which are regularly reviewed over time. Regular meetings between members of the senior management team and subject leaders focus on pupil performance in internal school and external examination testing in order to review curriculum development and teaching and learning strategies.

58. The school is developing extensive systems to monitor the academic progress of individual pupils. One-to-one tutorial meetings, short and long reports and parents evenings are strategies that are employed to provide pupils and parents with accurate, up-dated information on attainment and progress. Pupils spoke appreciatively of the opportunities provided to be involved in the process of monitoring their own learning, sixth formers commenting on how the system of setting future targets based on their GCSE results was very helpful in A level preparation. 'Value added' data is obtained by measuring pupils' progress from Year 9 test results to GCSE and A level outcomes. National Curriculum levels are efficiently reported to parents at the end of Years 9 and 11, to meet statutory requirements. Merit and achievement certificates effectively recognise individual effort and attainment. Annual reviews are carried out as required. National Records of Achievement clearly identify pupils' successes in many aspects of school life.

59. The assessment of progress and attainment of pupils with special educational needs is outstanding. All the learning within the department is automatically assessed within the lesson plans. More formal testing is done regularly, and the results used to evaluate progress and modify teaching where required. Progress across the wider curriculum is monitored through the IEP targets and by the regular fortnightly meetings of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and departmental link teachers. The progress and attainment of pupils with statements of special educational need are monitored closely, both to ensure that the requirements of statements are met in full and to ensure that the teaching of these pupils is modified according to changing need. Pupils whose difficulties lie with numeracy are carefully monitored by the mathematics department who work closely with the SENCO.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

60. The partnership with parents continues to be very good and is a strength of the school. The school prospectus emphasises the importance of a close working relationship with parents. This is stressed also in the mission statement and the staff handbook. Parents say they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. They are confident of the complaints procedures and points of contact. There are good communications through reports, homework diaries, newsletters, parents' evenings and completed questionnaires.

61. The Parents' Association meets regularly and is active in fundraising. The Association held a very successful Indian dinner, which was well supported by all sections of the school. There is an acknowledged need to encourage more active participation of minority ethnic groups at meetings and school events.

62. Most parents say they are kept well informed about their child's progress. The school prospectus is informative and the "new intake handbook" is welcoming and practical for Year 7 pupils. There is a useful homework guide. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. Parents receive a detailed report on their son's progress each year. This longer report gives a good overview of pupils' development and is produced for most year groups at the end of the summer term. A short report is produced during the autumn term. In addition to the normal consultation evenings, other meetings of parents are arranged, for example to provide information about the curriculum or to provide insight into curricular activities such as personal, social and health education. These are productive and informative.

63. Parents are warmly welcomed to school functions and play a part in supporting extra-curricular activities. Induction procedures for Year 7 pupils are comprehensive. They cover liaison with the contributory school, letters to parents and a visit to Desborough School. After starting Year 7, pupils write to their primary teachers inviting them to a reunion at their new school.

64. A small number of Year 8 parents said their children did not have enough homework. The prospectus says that homework will be set for all boys, but will not necessarily be of uniform duration, as the work set will depend on the nature of the course being followed in each subject. There is an appropriate homework schedule in place. The evidence of

inspection indicates that homework tasks are sufficiently regular and challenging to promote pupils' learning.

65. In addition to the routine involvement of parents in the education of their children, the special educational needs staff maintain particularly close and regular contact (sometimes daily) with the parents through telephone calls, home visits and meetings in school. In September of each year there is a special parents' evening at which the work of the department is explained. There are also very helpful booklets which detail the work of the department and give parents guidance on how they can contribute to the learning of their own children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. The school's aims and values give a clear purpose to its work. The very effective manner in which these principles are practised in the school is the result of careful planning, purposeful leadership and efficient communication. The school has a disciplined but supportive ethos, which is valued by parents and the local community. The governors are actively involved in promoting the interests of the school and show high levels of commitment to their work. They have appropriate committees, which enable them to be effectively involved in decision-making processes. Formal and informal contacts enable the governors to exercise an effective monitoring role in relation to school activities. They have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The close involvement of the chair of governors in the school has worked well in raising awareness of issues amongst fellow governors and in providing support where necessary. The governing body fulfils its statutory requirements apart from the provision of an appropriate information and communication technology entitlement, religious education in the sixth form and a daily act of collective worship. The school has produced a detailed draft development plan for addressing some of the information and communication technology issues. In general, the governors make a positive contribution to the life and development of the school.

67. The headteacher leads the school very effectively. His commitment, enthusiasm and clear sense of purpose have been significant factors in the school's continual improvement. He has adopted a participative and collaborative style of management. There is good support from other senior management staff, which promotes a good team ethos. Decisions are arrived at by a thorough analysis of the problem or issue. A good working relationship with staff has created a climate of trust. Staff support each other very effectively and this helps to maintain the smooth running of the school.

68. The governing body through the designated governor, the headteacher, the senior management team and all teaching and support staff share the commitment of the special educational needs department to maximising the achievement of pupils who have difficulties with learning. Leadership and management of the work within the department and of the whole school provision are excellent.

69. The senior management team has been effective in monitoring the work of the school. This has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards of achievement. The implementation of policies has been mostly successful, particularly with the increasing use of targets to raise standards of attainment in lessons. Middle managers in both academic and pastoral roles carry out their responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Particularly productive are the good working relationships that have been established within the various teams existing in the school. Most curriculum leaders are efficient administrators and monitor well the work of their colleagues; this promotes improved standards. However, the co-ordination of geography has had specific

weaknesses in administration and planning, but good strategies are in place to give appropriate support from the line management structure. Curriculum leaders are intrinsically involved in planning strategy for proposed development plans. This is an effective procedure for getting a commitment to common goals, promoting communication and raising awareness of school issues. In general, subject planning is particularly effective in producing good work.

70. Long- and medium-term planning is of very good quality. The school development plan gives an effective review of the previous year and commentary on outstanding issues. The current 'operational plan' is systematically prioritised according to school issues such as curriculum development and raising achievement. The plan provides an effective focus for the work of the school. The comparative performance of other schools in the locality gives valuable benchmarking data against which the school assesses its own standards. The development plan identifies appropriate staff responsibilities well.

71. The governors and senior management produced a detailed response to the last inspection. The governors have regularly reported subsequent progress in implementing the plan. Improvements in the quality of teaching are attributable to the successful implementation of the monitoring procedures by the senior management. Curriculum issues have been improved, such as meeting the National Curriculum requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4. However, whilst networking facilities for information and communication technology have improved there are elements of the National Curriculum still not adequately covered. Setting arrangements have been appropriately reviewed to provide a more coherent pattern of grouping by ability. The quality of the provision and teaching in the PSHE course has improved as the result of in-service training and the appointment of a co-ordinator. An effective strategy for target setting, coupled with a consistent assessment policy, is helping to raise pupils' expectations and levels of attainment. The senior management team has been re-structured to achieve more efficient and regular monitoring of the school's work. The role of curriculum leaders is now more sharply focussed on monitoring and improving the quality of teaching. The requirement for a daily act of worship is still not met. The unsuitability of some accommodation remains a serious issue for the school although the drama facilities have been significantly improved recently. Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection

72. The general ethos of the school is very good and builds upon a sense of shared values and mutual support. Parents at the meeting with the registered inspector, prior to the inspection, commented particularly on the strength of the school's values and the approachability of the school staff. All staff, teaching and support, work closely together and the sense of shared objectives is a strength of the school. The commitment of the staff in supporting the school's provision, both in terms of its curriculum and extra-curricular work, allied to effective management systems, provides a very good basis for sustaining improvements in the future.

73. Financial planning is competent and efficient. The school development plan is effectively linked to budgetary decisions and financial commitments. The senior management team and the governors' finance committee work well together to produce a budget, and monitor expenditure. The governors have prudently maintained the budget but current contingency funding is low. The overspend in the last financial year was due to an excessively long period of staff absence. In the current year, this amount has been fully recovered and an appropriate insurance policy is now in place. Overall staffing costs are in line with national averages. Capitation for departments is allocated on the basis of development bids. These procedures are effective and ensure an equitable distribution of available funds. The overall budget for learning resources is good and departments are

efficient in ensuring the optimum use of their resources to guarantee effective learning. The school closely monitors the use of funding for pupils with special educational needs and ensures that specific grants are used well and appropriately.

74. Effective procedures ensure very good financial control. The relatively few recommendations of the last audit have been successfully implemented. All spending is sufficiently monitored and regular financial statements are available for senior staff and governors. Subject development plans are effectively costed and relate well to the overall budgetary position of the school. The school monitors its expenditure very efficiently and ensures that the principles of 'best value' are applied systematically to its financial decisions. Excellent use is made of new technology to support the smooth running of the school and ensure efficient administration.

75. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teaching staff and support staff to meet curriculum needs in all subjects, although there are pressures on specialist coverage in Years 8 and 9 in design and technology. There is a very good balance of experience and new entrants to the profession. The quality of administrative and other support staff is good. The level of technical support is good in information and communication technology and very good in art and science. The in-service training provided is generally of good quality, with departments using their delegated funding well. There is very good central co-ordination and review of procedures for professional development by the staff development group and tutor with responsibility for this area. Most departments undertake evaluation of the effect of INSET on teaching and learning, but the process is not always systematic enough.

76. Formal procedures for staff appraisal and review have been set up, but are currently in abeyance. Appraisal has been replaced by an annual professional review which has many good features including self-review, classroom observation, targets for action based on improving learning, and staff development. There is a very effective induction programme for newly qualified teachers and statutory requirements are met with the support given by the professional and subject induction tutors considered especially valuable. The school is in partnership as a provider of initial teacher training with Reading University and this is well organised and effective. The quality of the arrangements is formally evaluated by the partnership to ensure good practice.

77. There are enough well-qualified specialist special educational needs teaching staff but insufficient support staff to give in-class support to pupils, or to share the very great clerical and administrative burden. The support staff, who all have relevant pre-appointment experience, receive appropriate training opportunities and are a most effective and dedicated group of professionals.

78. There is sufficient accommodation to allow the curriculum to be taught, but several related factors serve to undermine the effectiveness of teaching. A significant proportion of teaching takes place in non-specialist rooms which necessitates the carrying of machines, books and other resources. This unsatisfactory situation is most prevalent in English, modern foreign languages, religious education and mathematics. These conditions put a strain on both teachers and the maintenance of good resources. Many subjects lack suites of rooms, and several teaching rooms in huts are of poor quality and present a depressing environment for the teaching of several subjects. These factors are attributed to the historical nature of the school rather than the mismanagement of resources.

79. There are good-sized rooms in art and design and technology where the grouping of rooms enables professional dialogue and access to resources. However, in science the

poor state of the laboratories and the number of small rooms result in some teachers having to teach in several different spaces with the accompanying problems associated with accessing equipment. Lack of good-sized rooms also presents a problem in music. There is over 90 per cent occupancy of some specialist rooms and this presents timetabling issues, for example in the cross-curricular development of information and communication technology. Physical education facilities are adequate but a poor standard of maintenance of fields and redgras area undermines the high standards set by the department. Similarly, the floors in both the gymnasium and sports hall are of poor quality.

80. New drama facilities have been built providing very good subject accommodation. There is a rolling programme of redecoration and the school has endeavoured to put in place improvements. Despite attempts to present a more inspiring backcloth through a variety of displays, several areas of the school remain shabby in appearance and serve to provide a less than stimulating environment for pupils. Plans are in place to develop a new teaching block but, in the current situation and with projected numbers, the overall picture is unsatisfactory.

81. Given the present accommodation problems, the special educational needs base is the best that the school can provide, but it is inadequate. All the specialist lessons cannot be accommodated and the department's ability to provide flexibly for pupils' needs is very limited.

82. The provision of resources for learning is adequate in most subject areas, but significant deficiencies in some subjects render the overall provision unsatisfactory.

83. The timetabling schedule allocates resources appropriately, but the constraints imposed by the lack of sufficient specialist rooms means that there is an absence of consistency in the provision for some pupils, for example in the GNVQ business studies course. Subjects have adequate time for their teaching requirements. Inspection evidence indicates that the morning tutorial time is not used effectively by some teachers.

84. The sum per pupil allocated in the current academic year is lower than the average for similar schools. The number of books available in the library is comparatively low, but the general quality of the books is good. Resources in geography are unsatisfactory; there is a lack of overhead projectors and video facilities to support teaching in this subject. Basic learning resources such as textbooks and atlases are also in short supply. In physical education, although resources are adequate for teaching, some gymnastic equipment has been condemned and some is nearly at the same stage. An appropriate range of equipment is needed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for the teaching of gymnastics.

85. In design and technology some equipment is unsuitable for current and foreseeable curriculum requirements. The information and communication technology provision is unsatisfactory. In art, information and communication technology also presents a problem with limited equipment and poor access to specialist information and communication technology areas.

86. A further area of concern is the library, which is too limited for present and future demands. Provision for core subjects, English, mathematics and science, is adequate though information and communication technology provision in English is relatively poor. Provision for drama, however, is good.

87. Funds are allocated by a carefully designed process aimed at ensuring that all staff

have an input. Though the process is complex, involving a succession of staff and management meetings, it meets the fundamental objective well and is seen as fair. A contingency fund is kept to allow for variations in course take-up and for emergency need. Departmental development plans are carefully scrutinised in respect of their relation to the school development plan. There is a wide use of out-of-school resources.

88. The special educational needs department is adequately resourced with learning materials. All the resources allocated for the support of pupils with special educational needs, including those provided by the Local Education Authority for the specific support of pupils with statements, are used effectively and efficiently.

89. The school has worked hard to continue to raise standards and has successfully promoted pupils' progress, learning and understanding. The high quality of education provided and the improving standards of teaching ensure that the school gives very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

90. In order to raise standards the school should:

(1) Improve standards in

- (i) music at Key Stage 3,
- (ii) GCSE performance in design and technology,
- (iii) A level achievement in geography

by:

- improved curriculum planning in music and design and technology to ensure continuity and progression in skill development;
- the use of assessment data to identify pupils who are underachieving;
- monitoring of the quality of teaching to improve methods and develop more varied and effective styles of learning.

(Paragraphs 3,6,12,27,28,69,141,143,149,151,153,180)

(2) Review curricular provision for information and communication technology to meet statutory requirements, and:

- (i) achieve more consistency in ICT assessment,
- (ii) raise standards of examination performance at Key Stage 4

by:

- improved timetabling arrangements to accommodate an appropriate number of lessons at both key stages;
- a curriculum audit to identify the subject areas which will develop the strands of information and communication technology;
- a strategy for assessing the skills and competencies of pupils;
- continuing the training of staff to raise their skill levels.

(Paragraphs 3,27,29,31,36,43,66,135,146,153,161,165,166,167,183)

(3) Improve the quality of accommodation in English, science, modern foreign languages, music and physical education.

(Paragraphs 78,79,80,107,129,178,185,191)

(4) Improve the overall levels of resources particularly for:

- (i) information and communication technology and physical education;
- (ii) geography and music.

(Paragraphs 84,85,86,132,153,168,178,182,183,191)

(5) Meet statutory requirements in relation to:

- (i) the provision of religious education in the sixth form;
- (ii) the provision of a daily act of worship.

(Paragraphs 36,43,44,66,93)

Other issues for consideration:

- Use of target setting at Key Stage 3. (*Paragraphs 57, 180*)
- More planned opportunities for spiritual development. (*Paragraph 44*)
- More effective use of tutorial time in the morning. (*Paragraph 83*)

THE SIXTH FORM

91. Provision for the sixth form is very good. Attainment in all subjects for students entered for two or more GCE A levels or equivalent in the examinations in 1999 at grades A to E was just above the national average for boys in all maintained schools. At grades A and B, attainment was just below the national average for boys. Attainment in all subjects at grades A to E has been above the national average for boys over the last three years, and at grades A and B in 1998 and 1997. One hundred per cent pass rates in the 1999 examinations were achieved in mathematics, chemistry, biology, and GNVQ advanced business studies. Students in politics, economics, French and German, with a smaller number of entries, also achieved full pass rates.

92. A level points scores are measured by the school against the GCSE average score for individual students in a 'value added' analysis, which is used to good effect in discussions between the curriculum leader and headteacher, deputy headteacher and head of sixth form. Over the last three years, mathematics, chemistry, economics and French and German have consistently provided 'added value'. The school does not enter students for the general studies examination, and this tends to have a reducing effect upon the average points score when compared with other schools.

93. The range and quality of the curriculum provided for students are good. Courses are well matched with student aspirations, both academic and vocational. Business GNVQ is offered at intermediate and advanced levels – these are successful and popular courses. Efficient timetabling ensures that students have sufficient choice and suitable combinations of subjects. The provision effectively enables entry routes into further and higher education. Physical education, understanding industry, personal and social education and community service provide further enrichment in the curriculum. However, the school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education. The school has very good links with local businesses and with Reading and Southampton universities. An Oxbridge target group has been established for next year.

94. Effective measures are in place for reviewing students' progress. Students' minimum projected grades are measured against their current grades through reports on five occasions during the course. These procedures appropriately identify any under-achievement. The individual action plan booklet provides students with the opportunity for self-analysis of their performance. They assess not only their academic work, but also their contribution to the school. Students find the one-to-one tutorials helpful.

95. Private study time is used well in school, either in the sixth form centre or learning resource centre. Some students in Year 13 have the opportunity to study for up to six lessons at home provided they fulfil certain conditions.

96. The sixth form forum effectively complements the work of the school council. As well as other activities, social events are organised with a 'sister' school. Full use is made of

senior boys to provide good order and discipline around the school at breaks and at lunch-time.

97. Management by the head of sixth form is very effective. He receives good support from tutors. Prospective students are provided with a booklet describing all the courses available, and Year 12 students spoke well of the induction process. Further guidance is provided by a diary, the sixth form handbook and, at a later stage, the UCAS booklet. Planning for consortium courses for certain subjects in the next academic year with four Maidenhead schools is well in hand.

98. The quality of teaching is good or better in three-quarters of the lessons observed. In a mathematics lesson on parametric equations, the teaching was particularly good at involving individual students through questions and discussion. In a history lesson on the Ottoman Empire, a very useful self-analysis exercise enabled students to examine their essays to see how the focus and the analysis aspects of their essay-writing skills could be improved. In an A level theory lesson in physical education students were called upon to review and assess practical activities and consider their 'abilities' and 'skills'. Having removed the list, the teacher challenged the students by asking them to present their findings.

99. Attitudes are consistently good in lessons. In a talk on the "gap" year, Year 12 students listened attentively to a long and detailed talk. Response in the sixth form assembly to a visiting speaker and his presentation on forgiveness from one of the gospels was good. The students set a very good example to the rest of the school in their bearing, behaviour and smart appearance.

100. The staying on rate into the sixth form is in line with national averages and in recent years about 60 per cent of students go onto university. The sixth form is cost-effective.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	187
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	28	44	25	2	-	-

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1032	156
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	74	-

Special educational needs	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	263	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	189

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	26

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	168	0

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	107	126	132
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	107	126	132
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64(80)	75(77)	79(76)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18(36)	53(55)	38(49)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	113	125	144
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	113	125	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67(70)	75(75)	86(86)
	National	64(61)	64(63)	60(63)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23(26)	53(43)	43(54)
	National	31(30)	37(37)	28(30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	150	0	150

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	89	145	147
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	89	145	147
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	59 (59)	97 (94)	98 (98)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44 (40)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/A

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	69	0	69

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	15.5	N/A	15.5 (16.1)	2.7	N/A	2.7 (3.5)
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 pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	19
	National	82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	8
Indian	40
Pakistani	76
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	8
White	887
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	7	1
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	5	2
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	20	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	387

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.1
Key Stage 4	20.8

Financial information

Financial year	1998 –1999
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	£
Total income	2 618 303
Total expenditure	2 624 628
Expenditure per pupil	2 604
Balance brought forward from previous year	-14 789
Balance carried forward to next year	-21 114

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1000
Number of questionnaires returned	186

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	56	5	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	50	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	62	7	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	56	19	4	1
The teaching is good.	33	63	3	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	47	12	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	43	1	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	52	10	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	51	44	1	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	48	8	2	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	48	8	2	9

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

ENGLISH

101. In the 1999 national tests in English at the end of Key Stage 3 results were in line with the overall national average; they were above average for boys nationally but well below the results in schools serving pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the last four years results have been slightly above the overall national average and consistently well above average for boys only. English results at the end of Key Stage 3 have not been as good as those in mathematics and science. Since the last inspection in 1995 results in GCSE English at grades A* to C have risen steadily and in 1999 they were above the national average and well above average for boys. Numbers gaining the highest grades, A* and A, have been just above average for boys. Over the same period results in English literature have consistently been well above the national average for boys, even taking into account a decline in these percentages in 1998 and 1999, largely explained by an increase in the numbers taking this examination. Between 1996 and 1998 results in A level English literature were above or well above average but in 1999 they fell below average.

102. According to the evidence of inspection, standards in English at the end of Key Stage 3 are above those expected nationally of boys. Most pupils achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. They speak confidently and articulately, and those of higher attainment have a wide vocabulary; pupils with special educational needs communicate meaning clearly. Listening skills develop well. By this stage reading comprehension is good or very good. Boys of middle and high attainment talk and write well about the books they have read. Reading for research is strengthened by a good library skills course in Year 7, and reading for pleasure is successfully fostered by the department. Over the key stage pupils become proficient in a range of writing styles, and boys in top sets achieve very good standards. The support given to lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is very effective in improving the accuracy of their work. Though many in middle sets write well, improvement in their work is variable. The lack of a systematic approach to re-drafting and an inconsistent experience of the use of information and communication technology in English are hindering progress in writing.

103. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils attain standards that are well above average for boys. Most achieve very well in relation to their previous attainment. Oral skills continue to develop very well at this key stage, and by Year 11 group and class discussion is often lively and vigorous. Pupils listen constructively to each other and to the teacher. Boys with English as an additional language have as much to say as their peers, but some are hampered in expressing their opinions fully by a relatively narrow vocabulary. Across the range of attainment boys gain a very good understanding of the literature studied in class. They are learning to use evidence from the text, and comprehension, especially among higher-attaining pupils, is swift and thorough. The interesting approaches used by many teachers do much to develop the boys' understanding. In writing, some pupils achieve high standards; their style is assured, their vocabulary wide and their argument logical. Others, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and in the course of the key stage most manage to eradicate faults in organisation and errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils with English as an additional language, who do not receive specialist support at Key Stage 4, exhibit, in some cases, problems with verb tenses and sentence structure.

104. By the end of Year 13, A level students are coping satisfactorily and sometimes well with the demands of the course. Standards of discussion are impressively high. Well-structured writing shows a thorough knowledge of set texts, with a growing ability to develop and substantiate an argument.

105. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Virtually all teaching is satisfactory or better and in about three lessons in four it is good or very good. Careful planning is a strength: it helps pupils to perceive the logic in a sequence of activities. Not all teachers, however, remember to state the learning objectives of their lessons and thus help pupils to become aware of their own progress. Teachers' expectations are generally high of good work, effort and behaviour, and pupils respond well to the challenge. In the few instances when undemanding work is set, concentration wavers and standards fall. Teachers know their subject well and most use a wide repertoire of methods and strategies which interest pupils and motivate them to do their best. The language teachers use in the classroom provides a good model to pupils, from which they benefit. Most teachers create a very good climate for learning: their manner is friendly and civilised but also firm and businesslike. The management of lessons is less good when teachers tolerate chatter or when they themselves talk too much and lose pupils' attention. Learning resources are of good quality and are well used. Monitoring of pupils' progress in the classroom is effective, but the marking of written work is less consistent: not all comments show pupils what they need to do to improve. Largely in response to good teaching, pupils' attitudes to English are positive and many enjoy their lessons.

106. Coverage of the National Curriculum is comprehensive, but the use of information and communication technology is not widespread enough. The current setting arrangements are working effectively, and pupils with special educational needs and those in the early stages of acquiring English as an additional language gain much from the specialist teaching and support they receive. Past weaknesses in assessment are being addressed by the introduction of common assessment tasks and formal moderation procedures at Key Stage 3. The department is not consistent in the use of grading scales and National Curriculum levels or the systematic use of data to analyse performance and set targets.

107. Since the appointment this year of a new head of department and second in charge energy has been released to tackle the need highlighted in the last report for teachers to work collaboratively in producing coherent schemes of work. Recently introduced schemes are beginning to ensure that pupils have a consistent experience of the subject. A purposeful and open style of management is enabling teachers to support each other through lesson observation and induction procedures and through the more informal sharing of good practice. A second criticism in the last inspection was of the lack of opportunity for pupils to develop oral skills: progress has been made but in some classes the range of speaking and listening activities is still somewhat restricted. The third criticism concerned accommodation. This is still poor: English classrooms are scattered across the site and the most frequently used are dilapidated. Teachers do their best in difficult circumstances to create good conditions for learning but the situation is basically unsatisfactory.

Drama

108. Drama is taught to all pupils at Key Stage 3 and is available as an optional GCSE course at Key Stage 4. An A level course in theatre studies was introduced in 1998 and the first cohort will be examined this year; currently there are no A level students in Year

12.

109. GCSE results have been very good. Between 1995 and 1999 in every year except one virtually all the pupils taking the examination have gained grades A* to C. According to the evidence of inspection, pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are achieving above-average standards and students in Year 13 are meeting the requirements of the A level course. At Key Stage 3 they gain a repertoire of basic skills and techniques. Movement and the use of voice develop well, as do control and self-discipline. At Key Stage 4 pupils build well on their earlier experience of evaluation of performance. Confidence grows as they learn to analyse process and as they understand how to realise their creative ideas in performance. Written work is well expressed and well organised. In Year 13, revision work for the forthcoming written paper indicates that most students have a secure grasp of the production process and can express their ideas adequately.

110. The quality of teaching is at least good and often very good. Teachers know the subject well; they plan and organise lessons very effectively to involve pupils in their own learning and they consistently encourage good audience behaviour and collaborative group work, which are important components of drama and also contribute significantly to pupils' social development. The terms and concepts particular to the subject are taught from an early stage and pupils learn progressively to use and understand them. High expectations of sensible behaviour and concentration are the norm and are usually met. Pupils enjoy their drama lessons and many become involved in extra-curricular activities, for example, the Year 7 drama club.

111. Lessons are supported by detailed schemes of work of high quality and members of the team have worked hard to develop the well-structured A level theatre studies course. They are aware of the need to formulate and implement effective and manageable assessment procedures for drama at Key Stage 3.

112. The head of department works part-time and about half her teaching is in the English department. An unqualified teacher teaches drama for the equivalent of half a day a week. The only full-time member of the department is a newly qualified teacher. Despite this unusual arrangement and thanks to the competence of all concerned, the department functions well. The new accommodation is of high quality and does much to enhance work in drama and the profile of the subject within the school.

MATHEMATICS

113. Pupils' attainment in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average. The trend in performance since 1996 has also been well above average. In comparison with pupils in similar schools, boys' attainment is above average. The number of pupils attaining GCSE grades A*-C in 1999 is well above the national average for boys in maintained secondary schools. Pupils have also attained well above average GCSE results in earlier years. In comparison with pupils in similar schools, overall performance in GCSE mathematics is well above average. In relation to their attainment in most other GCSE subjects pupils are more successful in mathematics. The school enters a large group of students each year for GCE A level mathematics and all have attained pass grades in the range A-E in every year since 1994. Although the percentage attaining grades A and B is in line with the national average the overall performance is well above average.

114. By the end of Key Stage 3, boys' attainment in lessons and other work is well above expectations. Higher-attaining Year 9 pupils can confidently formulate and solve linear

equations. They can correctly find the areas of hexagons using a variety of methods. Pupils know and understand that the total probability of mutually exclusive outcomes is one and then use and apply this in the practical context of dice throwing. Middle-set pupils explore number series such as that for prime numbers. They tally accurately to complete frequency tables and bar charts. Lower-set pupils generally have sound basic mental and written number skills and can use calculators effectively. They tackle problems in a systematic way but lack persistence in improving their answers.

115. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is well above expectations. All pupils in the highest-attaining class in Year 11 have already obtained GCSE grades in the range A*-B in Year 10. They are at an exceptionally high level and show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of some GCE A level questions involving algebra and co-ordinate geometry. Middle-set pupils have a good understanding of GCSE topics in algebra, geometry and handling data such as ratio, similar triangles and probability. A few lower-set pupils are less secure in these areas. For example, although pupils add two three-digit numbers accurately without a calculator the process of long multiplication is less well understood.

116. Students' attainment by the end of the sixth form in the GCE A level course is above expectations. They can express various algebraic fractions as the sum of partial fractions, differentiate parametric equations to find equations of tangents to a curve and determine co-ordinates in three dimensions from vector equations. A very able further mathematics student shows considerable knowledge and understanding of the principles of mechanics to complete challenging A level questions. A few students lack confidence in their ability to simplify complex algebraic expressions or do not readily recollect some standard trigonometric identities.

117. The quality of both teaching and learning are good, or very good, in more than four-fifths of lessons. Teaching and learning are particularly strong at Key Stage 4. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and are enthusiastic about it, especially so at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In the best lessons, teachers involve pupils through careful questions at all stages of their exposition. For example, in a very well taught Year 12 mechanics lesson the teacher, by adroit questioning, skilfully steered the students towards selecting the most suitable equation to find the unknown force. The students broadened their knowledge and understanding considerably and some devised their own methods to solve other questions. Teachers introduce basic skills satisfactorily. In many lessons teachers highlight relevant mathematical words thereby encouraging pupils to use these terms appropriately themselves. For example, in a very good Year 8 lesson the teacher brought out the meaning and use of words such as 'discrete', 'continuous' and 'recurring' so that the pupils became confident in employing such terms themselves. Although teachers incorporate mental work regularly in lessons to improve pupils' skills there are occasions when pupils use calculators unnecessarily to perform simple multiplication.

118. Teachers plan lessons very conscientiously and capably. They use methods that are effective in drawing out the best from pupils. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on symmetry, the teacher encouraged pupils to reproduce and explain their own methods on the whiteboard to the whole class. This enabled other pupils in the class to improve their understanding of the topic. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils in the highest set in Year 11 have the opportunity to begin studying the GCE A level course. Teachers manage pupils very effectively and this helps to maintain a very brisk pace of working. For example, Year 10 pupils very quickly and responsibly formed small groups to pool their ideas on a task on travel expenses. Their discussions were of a high

standard and enhanced their understanding of how to find the most profitable method of calculation. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and are aware of subsequent needs of pupils. Some teachers record the information particularly well in their mark books.

119. Boys' attitude to their work is very good and their behaviour is exemplary. They listen attentively to the teacher and to other pupils when they are responding to a question. Pupils contribute thoughtfully in class and group discussions. In their individual work they concentrate hard and are persistent in seeking solutions. Pupils are very interested in mathematics and very keen to make progress. They always settle to class-work tasks promptly and complete their homework as required.

120. There has been good progress since the last inspection. The department is managed effectively, and monitors its work well. Teachers are highly conscientious and committed to maintaining the very high standards of attainment. The only significant remaining weakness is the lack of opportunity for pupils to use information and communication technology to support and enhance their work in mathematics. The schemes of work and policy documents provided are adequate but require further development to give maximum help to any newly appointed mathematics staff. The department has arranged in-service training in the near future for all teaching staff in the school on numeracy across the curriculum, but it is at an early stage in promoting and co-ordinating this.

SCIENCE

121. Attainment in science at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average for boys and well above the standards achieved in similar schools. In 1999, four out of every five boys achieved the nationally expected standard and two out of five reached the standard expected of higher-attaining pupils. This standard has been maintained since 1996. Observations of lessons showed clearly that these high standards are being sustained. Pupils in a high set in Year 8 were able to design and construct a "buzzer" which demonstrated their knowledge of basic circuitry and understanding of electromagnetism. Year 7 pupils, many with special educational needs, in a lower set, were all able to carry out an experiment testing solubility and could discuss their results using appropriate technical terminology. The results of frequent tests for the present Year 9 pupils, based on National Curriculum standards, indicate that the results in the national tests in 2000 will match those of previous years. During Key Stage 3 the standard of attainment rises in comparison to the standards on entry. This represents good achievement.

122. At Key Stage 4, standards are maintained and the performance at GCSE is well above the national average for boys. The average GCSE point score, which reflects the attainment of all the pupils in the year, was well above the national figure. Since 1996 almost all the pupils have achieved a GCSE grade in science. Again, observation of lessons confirmed these high standards. Pupils in a Year 10 top set were all able to use the very difficult concept of the chemical "mol" to calculate the formula of a compound from experimental results. Pupils in the Year 11 second set, revising for the examination, were confidently answering questions on genetics, which required them to remember and understand concepts such as meiosis, genetic engineering and recessive genes. The standards of attainment have improved significantly since the last inspection.

123. Standards at A level vary slightly from year to year depending on the numbers of high-attaining students opting for each course. Over time the standards match and often exceed the national figures. When compared to performance at GCSE, almost all pupils

achieve at least the standard that should be expected and many do better. In 1999, of the 37 students who took an A level science, 14 achieved grades that were significantly higher than indicated by their GCSE standards. Students in Year 13 revising for their A level biology examination could give interesting accounts of well researched investigation into the practical applications of hydrolytic enzymes. Year 12 physics students were all able to complete successfully a practical investigation of parallel forces and then deduce the underlying law from their results.

124. Teaching at both key stages and at A level is very good. Of the science lessons observed, all were good or better and two-thirds were very good. The basis of all teaching is careful but adventurous planning which results in exciting lessons with clear learning objectives. For example, a low-attaining group of Year 7 pupils, who thoroughly enjoyed a game designed to illustrate the principles behind identification keys, were then able to tackle a very challenging homework using a real key to identify insect larvae found in fresh water streams. Year 8 pupils all gained a secure insight into the behaviour of molecules in gases because they observed the actual movement of dangerous gases such as bromine demonstrated by the teacher, and were helped to link their observations to an experiment with diffusion in liquids, which they had undertaken themselves. In addition, they watched a very effective model showing particle movement and finally mimed the behaviour of the molecules.

125. Lessons are always demanding and move at a good pace. A very effective introduction followed by a well prepared practical enabled all the pupils in a lower-attaining set in Year 10 to work individually to produce a set of chemical reaction rates which, when assessed, warranted a high GCSE grade. The stimulating nature of lessons, particularly the extensive experimental work made possible by very good technical support, is resulting in highly motivated pupils who work very hard. The large numbers who opt to study science in the sixth form start their A level courses as confident and committed students, continue to develop as young scientists and take full advantage of the intellectually challenging and stimulating teaching.

126. The teaching of basic numeracy, literacy and computer skills within the science curriculum is good. Teachers help pupils to learn and remember scientific terminology and are always conscious of the difficulties that some pupils have with reading and writing. Particular care is taken to ensure that pupils have sufficient skills in measurement and drawing graphs. Pupils have much more "hands on" experience of using computers in science than is usual. All are able to use data logging as part of experiments involving measuring changes in temperature and pressure. However, the present timetable arrangement does not allow work with computers to be fully integrated into the science curriculum and therefore limits its impact.

127. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups with great sensitivity and skill. They enjoy their science lessons, cope well with the academic demands of GCSE in "double" science and virtually all achieve GCSE passes.

128. Management of all aspects of science is good. Good leadership, efficient organisation and sensible delegation of responsibilities result in all teachers working together with enthusiasm, mutual trust and a shared determination that all pupils will enjoy learning science to the highest possible standard. Assessment of pupils' work is very thorough. Books are marked regularly in a manner that constructively points out error and celebrates success. The results of frequent tests and other relevant measures are used well to monitor both the progress of pupils and the effectiveness of teaching.

129. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in almost all the aspects of science education which were then criticised. Most importantly, there has been significant improvement in the standards attained by pupils and in the quality of teaching. However, one major criticism has only been partially addressed. The very serious health and safety issues identified in the very old laboratories have been rectified, but the state of the accommodation is still unsatisfactory. The laboratories are in an awful state of décor, many are too small for a full-sized class and the arrangements for services (gas, electricity, water) are quite unsuitable for modern science education. At present, the efforts of teachers and technical staff are minimising the effect on the quality of education provided, but the difficulties of providing modern science education in these 50-year old laboratories are considerable.

ART

130. At Key Stage 3 attainment is above the standards expected nationally. Strengths include drawing, which shows evidence of searching observation and accuracy in recording. In the best work pupils are able to use line and tone to indicate depth and form and composition is also very strong. Three-dimensional work in clay is well designed and constructed. Colour is used imaginatively and good use is made of art historical material. The incorporation of National Curriculum Attainment Target 2, knowledge and understanding, with pupil creative work is a strength of the work at this stage. Understanding and wide experience of colour and its use in art are gained in this way. Sketchbooks are well used and provide a useful and readily available measure of progress.

131. Pupils develop an understanding of subject-specific terms, which are displayed in studios and discussed as they arise. This promotes the extension of vocabulary generally. The quality of work in complementary studies represents a significant advance from the situation at the time of the last inspection when pupils' critical and analytical skills were perceived as weak.

132. Attainment in information and communication technology is patchy, because of inadequate resources and access to facilities. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the 'open ended' nature of the course and sensitive teaching strategies.

133. At Key Stage 4, attainment is well above the standard expected nationally and is reflected in well above average results in GCSE. Notable strengths are vigorous drawing and very good, well presented, compositions derived from observation and rearrangements of common objects. Pupils display the ability to take a project brief and to extend it into different areas of drawing and composition in an independent way. Many pupils very effectively use collage. Written work is well organised, pupils write with accuracy and present their work well.

134. Art history is again used very effectively as an adjunct to creative work. There are good skills in ceramic work, pupils are able to model and glaze work and many show a well-developed sense of form.

135. As at Key Stage 3, information and communication technology attainment is patchy and variable, largely according to home access. In the sixth form attainment is above expectations, and this is reflected in A level point scores. In recent years attainment in ceramics has been well above average. Students show a creative maturity and are able to take their A level project work forward with a high level of skills in each of the required areas. Drawing reaches very high standards in some instances and presentation is very good.

136. Learning in all classes is strongly influenced by the quality of teaching and by pupils' behaviour. In over two-thirds of lessons observed the teaching was good and, in several instances, very good. At the time of the last inspection the teaching was reported as well planned with clear expectations of standards to be achieved. These features persist, expectations are high and are augmented by strong enthusiasm for the subject and versatile subject expertise. These two major strengths combine to motivate and interest pupils and to promote a very good basis for the individual help and tuition provided in lessons. Subject enthusiasm also generates pace in lessons and pupils' progress and learning.

137. Assessment and marking are thoroughly planned, related to school policy and include self-assessment by pupils in all projects. Pupils are therefore well informed concerning their progress. Pupils with special educational needs are sensitively considered in project planning and IEPs are acknowledged. Homework is related to project work, regularly set and carefully monitored.

138. Pupil behaviour in lessons is very good and helps to maximise the impact of the teaching on learning. Pupils concentrate well and sustain their efforts throughout lessons. Co-operation and relationships between pupils are good. The department is well managed by a curriculum leader who plays a full part in the teaching programme. The curriculum is effectively planned to meet National Curriculum requirements and the GCSE and A level syllabuses offered. Activities available for creative work are broad and varied and encompass work in both two and three dimensions. Coverage of information and communication technology is, however, a weakness and there is only sparse evidence of its use in an art context. The school policy on literacy and numeracy is followed where possible. Relationships within the department are good, with a shared sense of commitment. Documentation is succinct and informative and good display is a strong feature of the management of the environment. Resources are carefully husbanded and carefully stored.

139. A considerable strain was imposed upon the management of the department by a recent disastrous fire, which severely damaged studios and demolished work. Recovery is now on course. Accommodation is now good, with roomy studios, specialist provision for ceramics and photography and good storage.

140. The staffing of the department has now stabilised with three properly qualified teachers, a part-time non-qualified but artistically experienced teacher and a versatile technical assistant. Resources for learning are largely sufficient for present courses but resources for information and communication technology are inadequate.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

141. GCSE results are marginally below the national average but represent satisfactory progress for the candidates entered. However, results in work with resistant materials are much below other aspects of design and technology and food science. Overall, the results are a little below those obtained in many other subjects by the same pupils in the school and this has been a trend over recent years. The number of candidates taking the 1999 A level examinations in design and technology and communication was small. All but one obtained pass grades.

142. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have developed an appropriate understanding of design processes and sound evaluative skills. Higher-attaining pupils generate some good

ideas for consideration as, for example, in discussion about designing a humorous mechanical toy. However, graphics work is too variable in quality, because a large minority of pupils has yet to recognise the importance of clear and precise line drawings. The quality of construction work is often unsatisfactory, because pupils' skills and experience of using tools are weaker than they should be. In food science, pupils handle equipment, utensils and procedures competently and have the appropriate knowledge and understanding to explain some of the processes taking place.

143. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have made satisfactory progress from Key Stage 3. They have a good knowledge of task analysis and evaluative skills within the design process. Many use information and communication technology skills to analyse and present data from questionnaires, but they do not evaluate finished products so extensively. They have a good understanding of design features in furniture. However, pupils' attention to precision skills and care over 'fit and finish' in their practical work is below expectations. In food science, pupils show appropriate skills in handling equipment, utensils and processes. Most pupils have a good grounding in researching information about industrial applications, such as packaging and vending where health-related matters are taken into account.

144. There is insufficient evidence for judging standards in the sixth form generally but there are commitment and motivation to make complex products demonstrating a range of skills.

145. The teaching in all lessons is satisfactory. They are well planned and prepared, with some very good examples in food science. In the better lessons, teachers set clear expectations and use good subject knowledge and questioning techniques to focus on skills, particularly in design. Good management, and individual support, develop pupils' motivation to work. Learning is less effective when there is over-reliance on teacher direction which stifles autonomy, insufficient attention to precision and the pace of the lesson is slow with over-long undemanding activities

146. Curriculum planning is satisfactory but there are issues of continuity. Longstanding gaps exist between some aspects of the work. Changes have strengthened design skills at the expense of manufacturing. The use of information and communication technology applications and work with microelectronics, other than the attention given to handling information, is insufficient for modelling, measuring and control. The opportunities for realising designs are unexciting or limited by facilities that are out of use, as for example those for hot processes. There is little evidence of artefacts on display that inspire pupils to expand on ideas and suggest quality in manufacture.

147. Since the last inspection the school has made some progress in addressing the issues raised. The curriculum plan needs to be revised in line with imminent changes. There is clear expertise and capacity for teamwork amongst the staff. However support from senior staff to redress the temporary loss of leadership from the department will be needed to manage these developments with confidence and success.

GEOGRAPHY

148. Since 1996, GCSE A*-C results have varied considerably. Normally, they are close to the national average but in 1999 they were considerably above it, when compared with similar schools. However, fewer pupils attain the higher grades than is the case nationally. The subject is not a popular option at GCSE, which is unusual for boys. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school, results have been below average. A level

results have been noticeably below the national position and relatively few students attain the higher grades.

149. Most pupils achieve standards that are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and above at the end of Key Stage 4. In the sixth form standards are below expectations for the course. There is underachievement in some classes at all key stages, but particularly at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have a sound grounding in geographical skills and vocabulary, although key words need emphasising more. Most boys can use and interpret maps satisfactorily, but need more practice in graphical representation of statistical data. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of spatial and environmental issues and good understanding of levels of world development. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can, in general, explain a range of physical and human processes competently, for example river and glacial action and urban land use models. They can also apply geographical skills suitably to their independent project work. In the sixth form some students show a satisfactory grasp of geographical concepts but others do not organise themselves well and independent study is limited. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress.

150. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive; many display a real interest and enjoyment in their work. Behaviour is always good and mostly very good. Pupils develop constructive relationships with their teachers and in many lessons, particularly at Key Stage 4, a real rapport is evident. This contributes greatly to pupils sustaining a satisfactory level of progress. Pupils' individual responses to questions are often good, but in some lessons a greater class response needs nurturing. The attitude of some students to their sixth form studies is disappointing as course assignments are not completed to time and necessary work preparation for lessons is not done.

151. Teaching overall is satisfactory but there are variations between key stages. Teaching is mainly satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but is occasionally good or very good. At Key Stage 4 it is generally good and sometimes very good. Teaching in the sixth form is either unsatisfactory or just satisfactory. Teachers' management and control of classes are good. The best teaching is well structured with lessons having a clear focus and based on a foundation of detailed planning which ensures lessons are interesting, have variety and meet the needs of pupils, thus promoting learning. They have good pace, are challenging and presented in a lively manner using good visual aids and local examples, thus providing a positive and significant impact on the quality of learning. In these lessons staff have a secure knowledge of the subject matter taught. When teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because of an over-formal presentation, the lack of enough visual materials to initiate dialogue and the failure to provide the challenge and analyses required of A level lessons.

152. Teaching is sometimes characterised by insufficiently high expectations, with tasks not stretching the higher-attainers, resulting in underachievement. In some lessons there is insufficient consolidation and re-enforcement of the main teaching points. At Key Stage 3, theoretical models are used at the expense of local maps and actual examples within the experience of pupils. There is also need for more independent enquiry work at all key stages. Literacy skills are well developed and numeracy is satisfactory. Marking is regular but of very variable quality. It is frequently perfunctory with little helpful comment on how standards of work can be further improved and there is a reluctance to mark basic mistakes such as key words and place names and this impedes boys' progress. Pupils need to be more fully involved in evaluating their own work and setting targets to sustain progress. Fieldwork is effective at all key stages and greatly enriches studying; the best work is of high quality but more is necessary at Key Stage 3. Information and communication technology has been little developed and there is no coherent programme of information

and communication technology skills linked to appropriate curriculum topics at Key Stages 3 and 4.

153. The previous inspection report identified numerous weaknesses and although the leadership is no longer shared and there is some monitoring by the head of faculty, many of the issues raised have not been sufficiently dealt with. These include the standard of A level work, the use of information and communication technology, access to video facilities and the monitoring of marking across the department.

154. Whilst leadership and management have, in the recent past, been unsatisfactory, strategies have been put in place to improve the situation. The department was affected by a lack of stability in staffing, which disrupted the continuity of learning for pupils and which held back curriculum development. The subject development plan is not fully costed or regularly reviewed. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching occur regularly, but there is a need to evaluate how teaching can impact more directly on the learning that takes place. Classrooms, storage and staff accommodation are good, and good quality wall displays including pupils' work provide an effective learning environment. Learning resources are poor, with serious shortages in textbooks and limited access to information and communication technology, which affects progress.

HISTORY

155. In 1999, GCSE results at grades A* to C were in line with national averages, although in the previous three years results were well above national averages. However, the 1999 results largely reflected the prior attainment of boys taking the course. Results at grades A* to G have been consistently above national averages. A level results at grades A and B have varied over the last three years. Attainment at grades A to E is usually in line with national averages, although in 1999 the results were marginally below.

156. Attainment towards the end of Key Stage 3 is above the nationally expected level. Most pupils have a good understanding of the major events and changes in the periods they have been studying. They are able to construct historical explanations successfully and can make links between different parts of their work. Pupils work well with sources and are beginning to understand why events and situations are interpreted in different ways. Pupils research and organise information with confidence, and many pupils produce well argued and persuasive historical writing, for example analytical writing by Year 9 pupils on aspects of the First World War. Overall, pupils achieve well during Key Stage 3 and make good progress. Attitudes to the subject are very positive and behaviour is very good.

157. At Key Stage 4, attainment is above the national expectations. Pupils master the content of the course successfully and have a good understanding of the underlying themes in 20th century history. They use a wide range of sources well. In the sixth form attainment in the large Year 13 group is broadly in line with national expectations for the course. Students have a satisfactory and often good grasp of topics in the course, and can analyse relevant issues and questions, as for example, the success or failure of policies in the reign of Mary Tudor. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in history at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The overall attitudes of those taking the subject at GCSE and A level are very good.

158. Only six lessons taken by history staff were observed, because for most of the inspection week all but one member of the department were visiting the First World War battlefields with Year 10 pupils. A further four history lessons taken by supply teachers were also observed. These observations, together with evidence from an analysis of

pupils' work and of the subject scheme of work, confirm that the overall quality of teaching is at least good with some evidence to suggest that it is very good. Good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for history from specialist staff are well used to extend pupils' understanding. The planning of lessons is very thorough and well matched to pupils' learning needs; for example, tasks on life in medieval England, set for a Year 7 group and supervised by a supply teacher, worked well. Teaching methods are varied and appropriate to the needs of pupils. Skilful questioning is well used to clarify and consolidate pupils' learning; for example, lively questioning in a Year 12 lesson helped students think through and structure what they knew about the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Good strategies are in place to increase the range of pupils' historical vocabulary and to develop their extended writing skills. Pupils are well managed and lessons are taken at a very good pace. Overall the quality of pupils' learning is good. They concentrate well in lessons and are able to work independently.

159. Since the last inspection assessment procedures in history have continued to improve. Criteria for assessment are now closely linked to the level descriptions in the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3, and good procedures for self-assessment and target setting are now in place. The department has also developed good teaching resources and strategies to meet the needs of lower-attaining pupils. The number of pupils choosing to take the subject at GCSE and A level has increased. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection.

160. Strong leadership and close staff collaboration help to make history a very effective subject in the school. Regular monitoring ensures that teaching is at a consistently high standard, and good assessment procedures enhance pupils' learning and progress. Information and communication technology is still insufficiently used in history, although some development has taken place since the last inspection, especially in improved staff expertise and increased familiarity with resources.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

161. Attainment in the 1999 GCSE information studies examination was below the national average, but in line with the expectations for the relatively small number of candidates entered. Attainment in A level computing was in line with national averages.

162. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have a good knowledge of the command structure of office software to enable them to manipulate text in word processing, enter data and use wizards for graphing. For example, data from questionnaires is analysed and appropriately presented graphically in pupils' design folders in technology. Pupils successfully learn the principles underlying the use of databases and desktop publishing. At Key Stage 4, pupils extend their knowledge to research information from the Internet, and use appropriate software more competently for word processing, analysis and presentation. Students in the sixth form have successfully developed and use appropriate basic skills in information and communication technology to support their work in GNVQ business studies.

163. In subject lessons, where information and communication technology is a focus for attention, teaching is satisfactory or better with some examples of very good work. All of these lessons have good, detailed planning.

164. The most effective specialist lessons are characterised by good class management with a sharp focus on information and communication technology skills, particularly on developing knowledge of commands. Teachers develop good working relationships that encourage motivation and enthusiasm, irrespective of the attainment of pupils. Computer

technology is used very effectively to promote learning as, for example, in a German lesson where pupils successfully used the Internet and some CD ROM software for self-assessment. However, there are some unsatisfactory features in teaching of information and communication technology. On occasions there is an over-reliance on the teacher's input of information, which stifles pupils' independent work, and questioning that is limited to the most responsive pupils without challenging others. In a broader context the overall assessment of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory with limited co-ordination of work completed in other subjects.

165. The curriculum overall does not meet all the National Curriculum requirements. Although since the last inspection significant changes to the pattern of provision have strengthened the attention given to developing basic skills in the use of information and communication technology applications, developments are not yet fully in place to ensure pupils' entitlement throughout the curriculum. Appropriate attention is given to handling information at both key stages, but there is insufficient emphasis on modelling, measuring and controlling through constructing information and communication technology procedures.

166. The use of information and communication technology is inconsistent across the curriculum. There is effective use in modern foreign languages, science and business studies. In English, computers are used to develop punctuation and spelling skills, but not in a consistent manner. In physical education pupils' performance data is logged and analysed to set targets effectively for individual improvement.

167. The long-term curriculum plan for each key stage does not ensure sufficient continuity or progression. The long intervals between one information and communication technology lesson and the next limit skill development in some classes. The overview of pupils' competencies is adversely affected and assessment is therefore uncoordinated.

168. The school has made some, but generally insufficient, progress since the last inspection. The present resource level is a limiting factor for some aspects of information and communication technology work. However, the development of a network and the upgrading of computers are continuing. The school has produced an effective audit of curriculum requirements and plans for implementation. There is clear expertise and capacity amongst the staff carrying appropriate responsibilities to manage these developments with confidence and success.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

169. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examination in 1999 in French was substantially above the national average for boys in all maintained schools. The proportion of grades A* and A was also higher than the national average for boys. The proportion of grades A* to C gained by boys in German, which is not the first foreign language, was double the national figure; just under half of these grades were A* or A. All pupils entered for each language gained a grade at A* to G. In school, boys perform better in French and German than in all the other subjects they take.

170. In the 1999 A level examinations, in French and German, all students gained a pass grade. The composite grades in each language were higher than the national average. The proportion of students gaining grades A or B was higher in German than that nationally.

171. By the end of Key Stage 3, boys' attainment in French and in German is above the standard expected nationally. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is good because of the extensive and consistent use of it in the classroom by teachers; pupils at all stages accept the use of the foreign language by teachers as the norm. Oral skills are good. A Year 7 French set spoke confidently to the teacher and to each other in paired work. In their written work, Year 8 pupils can write about the buildings in Maidenhead. Higher-attainers in a Year 8 German class displayed a very good range of writing, showing knowledge of accusative and dative cases, and much of the writing was extended. By Year 9 pupils can write about themselves and show knowledge of the perfect and future tenses, mainly in exercises rather than in short passages of extended writing. Some higher-attainers in a Year 9 French set have written passages of level 6 standard.

172. Boys' attainment in French and German by the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the standards expected nationally. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is very good. Pupils are confident in their oral skills. In the final oral tests, Year 11 German pupils spoke competently and confidently, displaying good knowledge of the perfect tense, very good recall of vocabulary and excellent use of inversion. Vocabulary and constructions were used accurately, and pupils were usually able to correct their own mistakes. In their written work pupils show a good knowledge of topic-related vocabulary to produce pieces of writing on real and imaginary subjects. They draft and redraft the work, the meaning is clear but accuracy varies. In their notes for the oral presentation, higher-attainers in French in Year 11 showed some very good expressions used in conjunction with a good knowledge of tenses.

173. By the end of the sixth form, students' attainment in German is above expectations for the course, and in line with them in French. Students in each language show a good knowledge of their set texts and their background – the Prussian occupation of Rouen in French and the anti-Semitism of the Nazi period in German. They understand the teachers' explanations and all students can respond to the oral questioning. Oracy in the German set is very good. The Year 12 German set used their good knowledge of topic-related vocabulary to pick out the salient points in a listening exercise on environmental matters. Written work by all students covers a range of topics and exercises designed to consolidate grammar.

174. Progress made by pupils with English as a second language or with special educational needs is good. Good support is provided for particular sets at Key Stage 3 and to a lesser degree at Key Stage 4, and liaison between teacher and support assistant is good. In a Year 8 class three pupils worked with the inspector, reading aloud sentences in the perfect tense with little difficulty. Pupils in the special educational needs class in Year 9 are making very good progress in their oral and listening skills. They spoke very confidently and very competently, with very good pronunciation and accuracy. Response by the group to enthusiastic teaching was excellent.

175. Teaching and learning at all three key stages are good. Teaching is a major strength of the department and is consistently good; in one Year 8 German lesson the teaching was very good, and in the Year 9 special educational needs class it was excellent. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are excellent, and they use the

foreign language in the classroom consistently and to very good effect. Their use of French and German impacts well on pupils' understanding. Lesson planning is very good, and pupils are presented with a variety of tasks and skills. This helps pupils to sustain their concentration during the 60-minute lessons. Effective strategies ensure that pupils have to make an intellectual effort, answering challenging questions for example. Flash cards were used well in a Year 7 French, Year 9 French and a Year 8 German lesson to encourage oral response and to learn new vocabulary. The overhead projector is used well to help pupils consolidate vocabulary or extend it. Regular testing is used to check work that has been learnt, and listening exercises provide teachers with an assessment of their pupils' understanding. In a Year 12 German lesson the transcript of the listening exercise was used well to consolidate the relevant vocabulary and then to extend students' oral skills in a new sentence construction. High expectations ensure that pupils and students make gains in knowledge in lessons and progress. Preparation for public examinations is very good and extremely thorough. Teachers know the requirements of the examining boards and impart this knowledge to their students. Class management is good. Homework is set regularly to extend the work of the classroom. Time is used well in most lessons, so that pupils remain 'on task' and work at a good pace. Relationships are very good. The excellent results in both languages in public examinations demonstrate the effectiveness of the teachers' commitment.

176. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development with its regular exchanges. The European dimension is well represented in the lively exchanges with a French and German school in the Comenius project, which also included a teacher exchange with Germany. Pupils have contact with native speakers; there are two such teachers in the department in addition to two language assistants. Pupils have the opportunity to work with an Italian teacher in twice-weekly lessons after school. International sport is used well to encourage boys' interest in the foreign language through newspaper articles. The main notice board highlights the news from French and German on-line newspapers – the political situation in Sierra Leone, for instance.

177. Organisation, management and leadership of the department are excellent. The curriculum leader provides clear direction for the department and is supported by a dedicated and enthusiastic team. Monitoring of the teaching, both by the curriculum leader and by the line manager, is most effective. In addition, teachers are encouraged to observe each other teach. Relationships are very good.

178. Since the previous inspection the high standards of attainment have been maintained. The successful lessons in Japanese have had to be discontinued because of lack of funds, but Italian lessons have been introduced, with funding from the Italian Consulate. Accommodation still presents problems, with some teachers having to teach in non-specialist rooms. Links with France and Germany have been strengthened. The Comenius project has been well established. Information and communication technology has now been introduced and is used effectively within the department. This is an area that has been prioritised by the department in its commitment to raise standards even higher, but at present it lacks sufficient hardware. The department has very good capacity to improve, and it has succeeded in motivating boys for modern languages and in bringing them success.

MUSIC

179. In 1999 the proportion of boys achieving the higher grades A*-C at GCSE was below national averages, but because of the small entry numbers comparison with national figures is not reliable. GCSE results have fluctuated since the last inspection. At A level all

students achieved grades within the range A-E which is an improvement on previous years.

180. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in music is below national expectations because performing and composing skills are weak. In Year 9 only the higher-attaining pupils, particularly those receiving instrumental tuition, achieve in line with national expectations for performing and composing. Pupils' attainment in listening and appraising is broadly in line with national expectations. In Year 7, pupils sing enthusiastically and the majority can perform simple four-bar rhythms accurately from music notation and maintain their own part successfully when singing in a four-part round. Pupils in Year 8 can play confidently and with good control. When playing music together as a class they can fit in their part with an awareness of others. In Year 9 pupils can compose short melodic and rhythmic ideas, but there is little development of these ideas in their compositions. There is also little evidence of pupils being able to combine melody and harmony. A number of factors contribute to the unsatisfactory standards at Key Stage 3; these include insufficient use of exemplification material, inadequacies in the scheme of work, and unclear learning objectives for individual modules of work. The modules do not include adequate criteria for assessing performance and composing skills, and there is a lack of target setting for individual pupils. The majority of boys, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in most lessons.

181. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 11 achieve well at their own level in composing and performing and there are examples of very good work. In Year 10 pupils' achievements in performing are in line with national expectations. In a Year 10 lesson pupils' skills in evaluating their own and each other's performances were particularly impressive. Their listening skills develop well. Attainment in the sixth form is broadly in line with expectations. Sixth form students have used music sequencing software on computer to create very effective compositions.

182. The quality of teaching is good overall. It ranges from satisfactory to very good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use their own instrumental and vocal expertise effectively to help pupils' learning and to provide good role modelling. In lessons where there are very good management of pupils and insistence on high standards of behaviour, pupils are fully engaged in their work and make good progress. In some lessons assessment is used very effectively to help pupils make progress with their playing or with their understanding of technical terms in listening activities. A lively pace and enthusiastic delivery led to pupils being enthusiastic and enjoying their practical work. Lessons are well planned in terms of the activities and resources to be used. However, in Years 7 to 9, materials and tasks are insufficiently adapted to challenge and to meet the needs of pupils at different levels of attainment within a class, particularly the low attainers and those who are learning to play an instrument. Consequently, these pupils do not make sufficient gains in their learning by the end of a lesson.

183. The music department is well resourced with tuned and untuned percussion instruments, which have increased in number since the last inspection. There are sufficient keyboards with full-size keys for one class of pupils to share. However, there are insufficient keyboards with sequencing capabilities or computers with sequencing software to enable teachers to meet National Curriculum requirements for the use of information and communication technology in music.

184. Extra-curricular provision is very good and has a positive effect on developing pupils' performing skills. Instrumental tuition is provided by teachers from the East Berkshire Music Trust on a wide range of instruments. Extra-curricular activities include a four-part choir, 'barbershop' vocal group, jazz band, classical and electric guitar group as well as smaller instrumental ensembles. These groups take part in many concerts and events in and out of school such as the annual 'David Roberts' Memorial Concert at school and the SOS concert in aid of the charity Scope at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. The standards of performance achieved by the boys are excellent.

185. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching has improved. More importance is attached to performing and composing activities and their integration with listening tasks. However, there is still too much time spent in lessons on writing activities which could be set for homework. The redecoration and refurbishment mentioned in the previous report have been carried out but, because of the age of the building, now needs further work. In general, the accommodation is still unsatisfactory and has an impact upon standards, particularly at Key Stage 3. More percussion instruments have been purchased. The department's response to the previous inspection report has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

186. GCSE results in 1999 were lower than in the previous year. However, these results were for the first year when nearly the whole year group followed the GCSE course and all pupils gained a pass grade. Boys' performance was below the average for the school, and below the national average. A level results in 1999 were also lower than in previous years. In general, standards and numbers taking A level have remained consistent since the last inspection.

187. In lessons at Key Stage 3 most pupils achieve standards often above national expectations for their age in a range of games and athletics. At Key Stage 4, attainment is high in games, and some pupils in cricket and athletics perform at a very high standard. These achievements reflect the thorough work the pupils do over the key stages in cricket, athletics and tennis. Pupils' ability to evaluate their own and others' performance is weaker than it should be at both key stages. The understanding of key principles and the context of skills in games are insufficiently developed. In A level lessons, all students can understand the impact of sporting activities on the body and its systems.

188. Pupils make good and often very good progress through structured units of work in games and athletics. Grouping by ability in games classes enhances pupils' progress. In athletics accurate assessment and record keeping enable pupils to develop at a level appropriate to their ability. A level students make good progress in coping with the academic element of the subject. The extensive extra-curricular provision enables many pupils to extend and refine their skills. Sixth form students are involved in a worthwhile course of games activities, and some make a valuable input by supporting the extra-curricular programme. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and are fully integrated into lessons.

189. There are high standards of behaviour in most lessons. Pupils' attitudes to co-operative and competitive tasks are extremely positive, and incidents of non-participation are rare. The department encourages boys to be involved in a wide range of sporting activities, and individual pupils are able to achieve high standards of performance.

190. The quality of teaching is predominately good and sometimes very good. Lessons

are well planned and teachers know their pupils. They also have a good subject knowledge. Most lessons have clear objectives, with a planned progression. The pace is generally brisk, and appropriate challenge is evident through all activities at Key Stage 4. A level teaching is also strong, and teachers' in-depth subject knowledge is effectively used to promote students' learning. The efficient management of pupils is a key feature of all lessons.

191. Accommodation is adequate for a worthwhile physical education programme. However, the standard of field and redgras maintenance is of a poor quality, and has a limiting effect upon achievement in some areas. The conditions for changing have improved since the time of the last inspection, but floors in the gymnasium and sports hall are of a poor standard.

192. In general, the provision for physical education has improved since the last inspection. All pupils now follow the GCSE course at Key Stage 4, which broadens their opportunities. A larger teaching team has been established since the last inspection, within which there is a healthy sharing of ideas. Programmes of work for athletics and gymnastics are now more structured and aligned to the National Curriculum requirements.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

193. Standards of boys' attainment, at the end of Key Stage 3, are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of major world religions and can use appropriate vocabulary when discussing their spiritual and cultural differences. They are able to research a variety of resources and extract and analyse information although some have basic literacy difficulties, which limit their progress. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 work confidently with ideas on the significance of religious terminology and the role of religious leaders. Year 9 pupils have produced some detailed topics on intolerance, racism and Victorian social reformers, often using good information and communication technology skills.

194. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are above national expectation for boys. Pupils are able to express interesting ideas in mature and considered fashion, good examples being seen in Year 10 lessons on the theory of evolution. Some lengthy, well presented coursework assignments, again using well-developed information and communication technology capability, were seen on themes such as Christian beliefs and Science and Religion. Standards of literacy are good overall, few pupils having difficulty in expressing their ideas to advantage.

195. The provision for religious education in the sixth form is minimal and does not meet statutory requirements. No external examination candidates have been entered for several years. A new GCSE short and certificated course, the latter for lower-attaining pupils, is now being followed by all pupils in Year 10.

196. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, most lessons seen being of a good standard. Teachers have good subject knowledge, planning lessons carefully to use mainly appropriate resources and time to advantage. Challenge to pupils is clearly evident in oral and written work. There are high expectations of effort, attainment and behaviour, to which most pupils respond in an exemplary way. A range of teaching methods is employed including the use of video, speakers from various religious groups and a Year 7 visit to important places of different faith worshipping in London. Some information and communication technology teaching and learning opportunities are provided, but this is an area in need of further development. Concentration is maintained throughout most

lessons, relationships are very good with praise and commendation helping to motivate pupils to give of their best. There is a good attention to the development of literacy skills. Class and homework are set regularly and marked to known criteria, with some detailed and diagnostic comments targeting future improvement.

197. The management of the department is efficient, with regular consultative meetings of subject staff being held to plan curriculum development, teaching methods and resourcing. Periodic monitoring of classroom activity, marking procedures and homework setting are effective. Accommodation is not grouped, one temporary hutted base being small and difficult to use for modern teaching purposes. Although some good displays of pupils' work help to improve conditions somewhat, the teaching rooms are not satisfactory. The subject continues to make a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of school life.

198. Since the last inspection, standards of pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 have improved and are now above the national expectations. An appropriate course has been provided in Year 11 for all pupils, enabling statutory requirements to be met at Key Stage 4, but this has not been achieved in the sixth form.