

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **GUNNERSBURY CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

Brentford, Middlesex

LEA area: Hounslow

Unique reference number: 102545

Headteacher: Mr John Heffernan

Reporting inspector: Mr Patrick Orr  
16007

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> February 2000

Inspection number: 186055

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	The Ride Boston Manor Road Brentford Middlesex
Postcode:	TW8 9LB
Telephone number:	020 8568 7281
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Derek Bourn
Date of previous inspection:	October 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
P Orr	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
A Smith	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Students' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its students?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
			Links with the community
M Davidson	Team inspector	Science	Accommodation
A Blow	Team inspector	Maths	Resources
C Griffin	Team inspector	English	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
E Gillmon	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	Assessment
M Lafford	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
R Grogan	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
M McGregor	Team inspector	Art	

D Adams	Team inspector	Music	
B Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	Extra-curricular activities
L Lowery	Team inspector	Design & technology	
H Davies	Team inspector	Geography Business studies GNVQ	
V Kerr	Team inspector	Special educational needs	Staffing and in-service training
S Richardson	Team inspector	English as an additional language	

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Inspection Quality Division  
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Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Gunnersbury Catholic School is an 11 to 18 voluntary aided Roman Catholic school for boys, which accepts girls in the sixth form. The roll stands at 1066, and the school is regularly and heavily over-subscribed. Pupils come from about forty primary schools and from a wide range of ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds. Twenty-two per cent are entitled to free school meals, a proportion broadly in line with the local figure but above the national average. About 32 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, but very few are in the early stages of learning English. Approximately eight per cent of pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs, below the national average. Attainment on entry to the school is above average.

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

This is a successful and improving school where standards of work and behaviour are high. The school is well led by the headteacher and strongly supported by governors and the community it serves. The teaching is consistently effective and, although there are some weaknesses, the school gives good value for money overall.

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

- The headteacher's leadership is effective in raising standards and securing the good reputation of the school.
- The school's aims and values are reflected in all aspects of its work.
- Governors are well informed and supportive.
- Achievement is good in a wide range of subjects at Key Stage 4 and is at least satisfactory in all subjects at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form.
- Predominantly good teaching is matched by mainly good learning across the age range.
- Pastoral care is effective and pupils are very well behaved.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good.
- Parents and the community served by the school support the school's aims and objectives very strongly.
- Staff are hard-working and committed to school improvement.

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

- The governors' role in monitoring and evaluation.
- The effectiveness of the senior management team in leading the school's curriculum development and monitoring its impact on standards.
- The proportion of lessons in which the teaching is very good or excellent.
- Inadequate National Curriculum coverage in information technology, design and technology and music, as a result, in part, of shortages in accommodation and resources.
- Weaknesses in the procedures for monitoring attendance and implementing statutory requirements for child protection.
- The inadequate support provided by the resources centre for pupils' learning across the curriculum.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1995. The issues for action identified at that time have been tackled in a consistent fashion, and in most areas there has been definite improvement. Standards are rising. The quality of teaching has improved. Pupils have more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning - for example in managing their planners and in setting themselves targets for improvement in work and behaviour, in a pilot scheme in Years 7 and 9. Pupils have more opportunities to take part in lessons, to ask questions, voice opinions and contribute to discussion. However, further improvement is needed in these areas. The roles of heads of department and heads of year have been developed and extended. Staff in these positions are now more regularly and successfully involved in consultation and planning. New heads of department in mathematics, science and art are improving management and standards of work in these subjects. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has been improved, although more support is still needed. The school has reviewed its approaches to marking and assessment and both are more effective in raising standards. Again, further development is needed, particularly in making pupils more aware of what they should do to achieve well. The range of extra-curricular activities has been extended and provision for pupils' cultural development is better. The accommodation has been improved, but much remains to be done. Financial planning and school development planning are now more closely aligned. The school has gained Investors in People status and made good use of the advice given in this context. Purposeful activity has started within departments in evaluating the quality of teaching. In-service training is better organised. Better use is made of non-teaching staff, who have gained in status by being given a wider range of responsibilities.

There are, nevertheless, some continuing weaknesses. The senior management team is slightly larger than it needs to be for the size of school, and is not as effective as it should be in all areas of its responsibilities. Not enough is done to monitor closely the cost-effectiveness of the school's policies and practice in areas such as curricular organisation, the use of resources for learning and the deployment of staff. The quality of financial planning is reduced in consequence. Although provision has improved markedly there are still too few computers. National Curriculum requirements are still not met in several subjects. Despite the weaknesses, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. The school has the leadership, and support from governors, to be well placed to build on the successes it has already achieved.

## 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:	compared with			
	of boys in all schools			in similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	B	B	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	C	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

*Similar schools are those with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. This is considered to be a valid means of identifying schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.*

The National Curriculum test results at Key Stage 3 and the GCSE results at Key Stage 4 are regularly above national averages and often well above. They are consistently well above the average for similar



schools. Since the last inspection, improvement at Key Stage 3 has largely matched the national pattern. Improvement at GCSE has been less than the national improvement, but this is partly because the school has adopted Certificate of Achievement courses for low-attaining pupils in certain subjects, as alternatives to GCSE. Even so, above average standards have been maintained at GCSE. Results are well above average when compared with results in similar schools, and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Pupils make good progress and achieve well at GCSE in English, mathematics, history, art, geography, music and physical education. They do not achieve as well in French and business studies. A-level results are slightly better than the grades in the table suggest, because students do not take general studies as an extra subject. Results are satisfactory when compared with students' earlier attainment at GCSE. However, many students start A-levels from a relatively low GCSE base, and the numbers who do not complete the course in some individual subjects are relatively high. Achievement at A-level in 1999 for those who took the examinations was good in a range of subjects including English, history, physics and physical education. It was at least satisfactory in all subjects. Sixth form GNVQ results in 1999 were good, with a high proportion of merits and distinctions.

The work in the classroom broadly matches the standards in examinations, and is improving, except in information and communications technology at Key Stage 4, where this subject is scarcely taught. High-attaining pupils achieve well at Key Stage 4, and satisfactorily at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. The great majority of pupils with special educational needs make progress that is at least satisfactory. Overall, progress and achievement are good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils respect teachers and the values the school promotes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are closely supervised around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Relationships are very good. Strong discipline provides a clear framework for pupils' personal development but, although there has been some improvement, pupils are still not given enough opportunities in lessons to think for themselves, offer opinions and develop ideas.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

#### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils</b>	<b>aged 11-14 years</b>	<b>aged 14-16 years</b>	<b>Aged over 16 years</b>
Lessons seen overall:	Mainly 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.*

The teaching is at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons, at least good in 73 per cent and very good or excellent in 20 per cent. The teaching is slightly better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Across the curriculum, the teaching is good, and not markedly better in any one subject than the others. Differences are more often associated with individuals than with subjects. The main strengths of the teaching across the curriculum are: very good class management; very good knowledge

and understanding of the subject; clear explanations to the whole class; careful preparation for examinations; and friendly and business-like relationships with the pupils. The main weaknesses are: insufficient adaptation of tasks, materials and use of language by the teacher in classes containing a wide range of attitudes and attainment; insufficient opportunities for pupils to take part in discussion, ask questions and venture opinions; and insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn through information and communications technology. Pupils' development as readers and writers is provided for satisfactorily.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is insufficient provision at Key Stage 4 for information and communications technology, at Key Stage 3 for music, and at both key stages for design and technology. Otherwise provision is satisfactory, except that there are some over-large classes at Key Stage 3. Sixth form provision is satisfactory. The range of extra-curricular activities is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory overall and an improvement since the last inspection. More in-class support is needed, and specialist help for the small number of very weak readers. Some large groups at Key Stage 3 make effective support difficult.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Specialist support is effective. Almost all pupils are competent in English.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The programme of personal and social education is satisfactory. Good careers guidance is provided by an outside agency. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. Provision for cultural development has improved, and is now good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Heads of year and tutors provide good support for pupils. Pupils are well known and cared for. However, the organisational arrangements for monitoring child protection are unsatisfactory. There are some weaknesses in monitoring attendance. The partnership with parents, who have full confidence in the school, is very good.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are successful in maintaining good attitudes to the school among pupils, and high standards of behaviour and application to work. Senior management is committed to ensuring that boys are successful, but the extent and effectiveness of their work as managers varies, and there are some weaknesses in line management and monitoring. Subject leadership and management are mostly good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are conscientious and supportive. They bring a wide range of expertise to the school, but do not yet take enough part in monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and governors have a good knowledge of most of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Test and examination results are analysed carefully. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully in most areas, but assessment and target setting are less secure. Most heads of department monitor teaching informally, but the monitoring across the curriculum is not rigorous enough. Heads of department have regular and useful review meetings with the headteacher. The school has identified appropriate priorities for development.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Finances are very carefully administered and the school is careful to apply principles of 'best value' in its contractual arrangements and purchasing. There are, however, some weaknesses in financial planning, and in a few respects the deployment of staff and resources is not as efficient as it could be.

There are sufficient staff to meet both the demands of the curriculum and the school's administrative requirements. Teachers are well qualified. Administrative and support staff give valuable service to the school.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The high standards of discipline and behaviour</li><li>• The high standards of work</li><li>• The care for pupils, including those with special educational needs</li><li>• The good links with parents and the community</li><li>• The headteacher's good leadership</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homework should be better organised and followed up</li><li>• The range of extra-curricular activities</li><li>• Information about pupils' progress</li><li>• A few parents expressed concern about mathematics standards and teaching in the sixth form</li></ul>

Inspectors agreed with most of the parents' views. However, they found that, although there were some inconsistencies in setting and follow up, arrangements for homework were good overall. They identified some weaknesses in sixth form mathematics, but found that the quality of mathematics was improving in the school as a whole and that sixth form achievement was satisfactory overall. They noticed that a relatively high number of students did not complete their A-level mathematics course in 1999, although this was not the case in 1998. They agreed that the quality of reports for parents could be improved, but felt that there was a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The attainment of pupils at the start of their secondary schooling is above average, as their Key Stage 2 test results show. The profile of attainment has changed in recent years, and is now higher than it was when the pupils who took GCSE in 1999 first came to the school. As far as it is possible to tell from the limited data available, attainment on entry was then about average.
2. Attainment in the Key Stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science, in terms of the average point scores obtained, has been above the national average for boys since the last inspection. The trend of improvement in the results has been similar to the national trend, except in English where it has been slower, particularly for those reaching the higher levels. Nevertheless, the English and science results have been slightly better, when compared with national figures, than those in mathematics. When compared with results in schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the Gunnersbury scores are well above average, and broadly in line with those in the top 5% of such schools nationally.
3. Attainment in lessons and other work at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average in English and science and broadly matches expectations in mathematics. Attainment is above average in most other subjects. The exceptions are art, modern languages, design and technology and music, where standards are broadly in line with national expectations. Standards in music are constrained in some respects by poor accommodation and lack of teaching time. Overall, progress during Key Stage 3, and achievement at the end of it, are at least satisfactory in relation to pupils' starting points, and reflect the mainly good quality of the teaching.
4. Standards in GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4, as measured by the average point scores and the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C, are well above the national averages for boys. The proportion gaining five or more grades A\*-G is below average, mainly because in English, science, religious education and modern languages a relatively large proportion of lower-attaining pupils prepare for Certificate of Achievement accreditation, rather than GCSE. When compared with results in similar schools, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A\*-C in 1999 was very high, and in the top 5% of schools nationally. The trend in GCSE results since the last inspection, as measured by the average point score, has been below the national trend. The adoption of Certificate of Achievement courses, which do not contribute to the average point score, has been influential in this context also. The proportion of boys gaining five or more grades A\*-C has, by contrast, increased slightly faster than the national improvement.
5. GCSE results in English and mathematics are well above the national averages for boys. It is difficult to generalise about the science results because pupils take different combinations of subjects. However, pupils achieve well in the three separate sciences, if one allows for the fact that three subjects are taken in the time normally allocated to two. Standards in double science are improving. Standards are well above average in art, geography, history, music and physical education. In modern languages, they were in line with national figures in 1999, but are generally higher than this, particularly in Spanish. GCSE results in design and technology are in line with national figures, but the pupils involved do better in this subject than in most of the other subjects they take. The reverse is true in business studies, where in 1998 and 1999, pupils did less well than in the other subjects they took. The GCSE results represent good achievement when compared with standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and pupils' attainment on entry to the school.

6. Standards in the lessons and work seen at Key Stage 4 reinforce the picture of high attainment and good progress given by the examination results. This is true of all subjects except information and communications technology, which receives very little attention at Key Stage 4, and business studies, where standards are below expectations. The teaching at Key Stage 4 is more consistently good than at Key Stage 3; this is the main reason for the better achievement.
7. Attainment in A-level examinations since the last inspection has been below the national average, except in 1999 when the average point score was close to the national figure. The results are satisfactory, because students do not take A-level general studies which, as an extra subject, usually improves the overall point score considerably in schools where students take the examination. The A-level results represent at least satisfactory progress from GCSE for those who complete the course and take the examinations. However, in 1999 for example, the non-completion rate approached a third in some subjects including mathematics (not statistics). The completion rate was higher in 1998, but in the current Year 13 is again relatively high. Most, but not all, those who drop out start their A-level course from a fairly low GCSE base, in some cases with an average of only grade D at GCSE. The entry requirements for A-level courses are fairly flexible, and it is possible for students to embark on two A-levels with four grade C passes at GCSE. This is low compared with the majority of schools and goes some way to explaining the non-completion rate. However, those who do not complete their courses gain little from their A-level studies, and may have been ill-advised to start them in the first place. To judge by the school's own analyses of 'added value' in the 1999 A-level results, the best progress by those who completed the course was in English, physics, history and physical education. Progress was at least satisfactory in all subjects. GNVQ results in intermediate business and finance and leisure and tourism have improved in recent years. In 1999 they were good, with a high proportion of merits and distinctions.
8. In sixth form lessons, attainment matches national expectations, except in history, where it is higher. Progress from GCSE is good in English. In mathematics, the most able make good progress, but the achievement of others varies, and is sometimes unsatisfactory for lower attainers, who often find the transition from GCSE difficult. Achievement in science at A-level is improving, and is now satisfactory overall. Among other subjects, progress in lessons is good in history, art, business studies and physical education. Elsewhere, it is satisfactory. It was not possible to observe work on the GNVQ courses, because the students were on work experience.
9. High attainers do well in the National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3, and in GCSE. The proportion of A\* and A grades at GCSE is above average in most subjects. Some of the students who attain most highly at GCSE leave to do A-levels at other schools. Nevertheless, achievement by the highest attainers who remain to take A-level is satisfactory: the proportion of A and B grades since 1997 has been close to, or above, the national average. High attainers are challenged appropriately in lessons in most subjects, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress and take a full part in the curriculum. The school's analysis of the attainment of different ethnic groups at GCSE in 1999, although unreliable for most groups because of the small numbers involved, showed clearly that, overall, the school benefits in terms of examination results from the presence at the school of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. In word-centred and aesthetic subjects, that is English, art, history, Spanish and music, boys' results at GCSE are better than one would expect by national standards. This success is not the result of a conscious policy for equality of opportunity, except in English, where successful attempts are made to build the English literature course round materials likely to appeal to boys. The school has not considered in a co-ordinated way the advantages that might accrue from its single-sex status. Boys' good achievement at Key Stage 4 reflects mostly the consistently good quality of the teaching, and the teachers' expectation that they will achieve well. It also reflects teachers'

very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach, and the approaches that are most likely to lead to success in tests and examinations.

10. Across the curriculum, most Key Stage 3 pupils with special educational needs achieve standards that are at least what could be expected, given pupils' attainment on entry to the school. In reading and spelling at Key Stage 3, almost all pupils with literacy problems make satisfactory progress and show significant gains in both reading and spelling. The majority of pupils who enter school with reading ages two or more years behind their chronological age gain the basic skills needed to cope with the wider curriculum by the end of their first year in school. A small number of pupils with specific learning difficulties do not make sufficient gains.
11. At Key Stage 4, most pupils with special educational needs reach standards across the curriculum that exceed expectations based on their attainment on entry.
12. Pupils learning English as an additional language attain at least satisfactorily against the normal measures of success such as GCSE results, even when their knowledge of English was poor on entry to the school. Some of these pupils attain very highly, as a result of the school being able to give them support in grammar and language structures and build on their prior knowledge of relevant subjects.
13. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of spoken English and listening are above average. Most pupils use Standard English confidently. Standards of reading are also above expectations, and high attainers read fluently and expressively. Most pupils cope satisfactorily with the reading they are required to do across the curriculum, although a few have considerable difficulties, even with relatively simple texts. Standards of writing are weaker, although above expectations overall. High attainers can write accurately in a range of styles. The lowest attainers can write neatly when copying, but a few have real difficulties in writing accurately at any length when they are not supported. At the end of Key Stage 4, the standards of speaking and listening of the highest attainers are well above average. However, a significant minority of pupils of all abilities prefer to remain passive in class and are reluctant to take part in discussion or speak at length. Overall, pupils' knowledge of specialist language across the curriculum is good. Competence in reading improves considerably, but pupils' development of research skills is not as rapid as it should be. A few low attainers continue to have difficulty in reading basic textbooks. Although standards of writing are above expectations, they are lower, overall, than standards of reading and speaking, as at Key Stage 3. High attainers write fluently and accurately, and organise written work very well. Low attainers make satisfactory progress, despite difficulty with spelling, punctuation and usage. In the sixth form, standards of literacy meet the demands of the curriculum. The high attainers organise argument and present ideas with real conviction. Middle-attaining students work hard and make satisfactory progress, but have occasional lapses in accuracy and style. Students read competently, although relatively few read widely beyond the texts they are required to study.
14. Skills in numeracy are above average, as at the time of the last inspection. Number work is secure and students are not permitted to become over-dependent on calculators. Students are helped to keep their basic skills sharpened. They demonstrate that they can apply their skills in a variety of contexts and their experience in other subjects is often enhanced because of the level of their numerical competence. Students' good levels of understanding of numeracy have a positive impact on project work in the sixth form.
15. Since the last inspection, and before then, the school has monitored pupils' and students' progress carefully and profitably against predictions of attainment in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, in GCSE and at A-level. Specific school targets now supplement the predictions. In 1999, the school did not reach its targets, except at A-level. Relatively speaking, lower targets have been set for GCSE for 2000 and 2001. The 2000 and 2001 targets are certainly more realistic, but may not be challenging enough, since the year groups working

towards these targets performed better on entry to the school and in the Key Stage 3 tests than the 1999 Year 11.

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

16. Pupils' behaviour and respect for the school's values are very good. Their personal development and attitudes to learning are good. The school site is tidy, graffiti are reported to be rare, and pupils' work is, for the most part, conscientiously presented and completed on time. Although some of the accommodation is not in good condition, it is generally well cared for by pupils. Pupils often show enjoyment and enthusiasm for their work, and in most lessons they settle down quickly and work with interest to complete the tasks they are given. The school is an orderly community, pupils are well mannered and the behaviour of most boys around the school is very good. During 'wet breaks', when pupils remain in the buildings, behaviour is good. At lunchtimes, boys congregating where no teacher is on duty are well behaved. Pupils behave very well in most lessons, and this makes a strong contribution to the standards they achieve. There is very little oppressive behaviour, and very few incidents that might be considered racist. Bullying is rare, and the rate of exclusions has gone down markedly since the last inspection. It is now broadly the same as would be found in most similar schools. When unacceptable behaviour occurs, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.
17. Relationships, as revealed in the classroom and in individual contact between pupils and staff, including non-teaching staff, are of high quality and contribute greatly to the positive ethos in the school. Although relationships between pupils and staff around the school sometimes seem distant, this is born of long-established traditions in the school and does not indicate negative attitudes. When spoken to, pupils are open, friendly and helpful. They are courteous to each other, staff and visitors and are willing to support each other in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Pupils collaborate effectively in lessons when given opportunities to do so, and demonstrate a tolerance of different views and outlooks. The majority of pupils are keen to contribute to many other aspects of school life. They take part in social events, go on the 'retreats' held for each class once a year, help in the library and play enthusiastically and effectively for school teams.
18. Most pupils respond positively to opportunities to take the initiative and demonstrate a sense of responsibility. The school encourages pupils to take more responsibility for their learning by, for example, providing a supportive homework club and offering extra tutorials for examination revision. Each year group selects pupils to sit as representatives on the school council and some boys in Year 12 take on the duties of school prefects. Pupils' participation in the extra-curricular activities provided, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, makes a good contribution to their personal development. Many pupils participate in fund-raising events for charity and are active in supporting the local community in a number of ways, such as the Christmas parties held for senior citizens and for adults with disabilities. Many pupils participate in activities such as school concerts, the school band and other musical productions. The school emphasises the need for personal development as the key to learning to work independently.
19. Attendance is satisfactory: rates are broadly in line with the average for similar schools. There is very little unauthorised absence. These judgements replicate those made at the time of the last inspection. The Education Welfare Officer reports that, currently, 20 pupils from the school are being monitored for low attendance, including some pupils with long-term sickness. Most of the unsatisfactory attendance is in Years 10 and 11. This situation is well under control and the numbers involved lower than in many similar schools. Most pupils arrive punctually for lessons. There is, however, some lateness for morning school. Mostly, the reason given for this is transport difficulties. Many pupils have awkward, and often long, journeys to make to school each day, but some pupils appear to cope with the problems more effectively than others.



20. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the school, work hard, take a full and valued part in all aspects of school life and show great maturity in coming to terms with their learning difficulties. The enthusiasm pupils bring to the reading scheme run during registration times, and their willingness to attend spelling and homework 'clubs' during lunch-time and after school, are of great credit to both the pupils themselves and their teachers.
21. Pupils learning English as an additional language respond well to the provision made by the school to meet their language learning needs. They want to succeed in English and this motivation, combined with the good teaching they receive, helps them make good progress overall.
22. Traditions of very good behaviour and good attitudes to learning have been maintained since the last inspection and, as far as it is possible to tell without direct evidence, strengthened.

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

23. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, when it was described as 'sound and often good throughout the school'. It is now predominantly good in all age groups, though slightly better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. In this inspection, the teaching was at least good in 73 per cent of the 170 lessons seen and at least satisfactory in 98 per cent. The quality was very good or excellent in 20 per cent of the lessons, and unsatisfactory in only two per cent. The main reasons for the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons were two: firstly, inadequate control of the pupils; and, secondly, a failure to promote learning, mainly as a result of talking too much at the pupils. The overall improvement since the last inspection is mainly the result of better, though far from flawless, teaching in the main areas identified as needing improvement at that time - that is over-direction by the teacher, inadequate provision for pupils of different abilities in the same class, and a lack of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. These remain areas of relative weakness in many lessons, but the weaknesses are less obvious and there are examples of good practice in all three respects in all subjects.
24. The quality of learning broadly matches the quality of teaching, and does so most closely in high-attaining classes when teachers and pupils work together towards clear learning objectives. A very effective Year 8 Spanish lesson is an example. The pupils, who had been learning Spanish for only one and a half terms, were very keen to demonstrate their knowledge and learn new words and phrases about describing a house. They were already very familiar with the names for different rooms and parts of the house. The pupils were extremely attentive and very biddable. The teacher took advantage of these circumstances to get maximum participation in oral work. Consequently, the pupils already had very good pronunciation. There was a sense of urgency about the whole lesson including the paired oral work, when only Spanish was heard. Pupils made excellent use of the time available to them and excellent progress. Weaker features of learning are most obvious in some Key Stage 3 lessons, in science and mathematics for example, when insufficient account is taken of the wide range of attainment in the class, which is treated as a homogeneous group when it is far from being so. Even when materials have been prepared to cater for pupils of different abilities, as in history where 'activity sheets' at different levels are sometimes used in mixed ability classes, the weakest pupils sometimes find it difficult to cope on their own with the texts provided, and they make little progress. The low level of provision of in-class support is a factor here. By contrast, provision for pupils of all abilities is good in Key Stage 3 physical education. In Year 7 physical education, for example, lessons are carefully planned with appropriate content, which ensures that all pupils are challenged sufficiently. Pupils make good progress in collaborative work, in recording one another's performances and in understanding the nature of health-related fitness.

25. Overall, the quality of learning in the school has improved since the last inspection, and is now good. Some of the best learning is in the sixth form where teachers are often more prepared - with smaller, more mature classes - to vary their teaching approaches, take risks and give students responsibility for their own learning. In a Year 13 history lesson, the boys were divided into two groups to discuss the factors that led to the success of the Liberals in the 1906 general election. The structure of the lesson provided an interesting and thought-provoking challenge, in that the two groups were required to consider the issues from opposing standpoints, drawing on their prior learning in very different areas – from the Boer War on the one hand, to the evils of unemployment on the other. The students debated the topics with some animation and obvious interest. All made good progress. The teacher moved between the groups to engage them in their thinking and push their learning forward. In a Year 13 business studies lesson, the teacher enabled students of very different attainments to learn effectively through simulation exercises and group presentations on the theme of ‘lean production techniques’. The teacher had high expectations and the students’ response was excellent. A few lessons were much weaker. For example, students in a Year 12 design and technology lesson had very little chance to participate because most of the lesson consisted of lecturing by the teacher, with very few questions asked by either the teacher or the students. Learning was seriously restricted. In most subjects across the age range, there is still a tendency, as there was at the time of the last inspection, for teachers to be over-directive, not to evaluate students’ knowledge and understanding sufficiently as the lesson progresses, and not to be varied enough in their teaching approaches. Nevertheless, the picture is better than in 1995, when the inspection team reported that the teaching often lacked variety, and much consisted of ‘exposition followed by examples, with a narrow range of activities’.
26. Class teaching – which is the dominant mode in the school as a whole - is mainly of good quality, benefiting from very good class management, clear explanations, generally appropriate questioning techniques, friendly yet business-like relationships with the pupils, and, in the great majority of lessons, very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Expectations of pupils’ performance are usually, though not always, high. An example of class teaching of very good quality is a Year 8 mathematics lesson with a lower-attaining class. The task set was to analyse the contents of a tube of ‘Smarties’ by colour. The teacher maintained a brisk pace throughout, with a combination of direct instructions, pair activity, question and answer sessions and individual written work. Questions were particularly well used to get the pupils to speculate – for example: “Why do you think there are more yellow ones than any other colour?” “I’m not sure, I think it is...” “Maybe it’s a cheaper colour?” “No, that’s not it, the total is an odd one and I divided by an odd one, and it won’t go...” Pupils expected to learn in this lesson, to get things done, and to achieve: “We’ve done that, Miss,” one boy said, pleased to have got over one step and to be moving on to the next. Achievement was very good, and all the pupils made very good progress. One-to-one support was good - encouraging, clear, brisk, focused and keeping the pupils moving. Pupils were allowed to eat the ‘Smarties’ at the end of the lesson.
27. Teachers’ very good knowledge and understanding of the subject underpin the efficient preparation of pupils and students for tests and examinations in most subjects. History teaching is notable in this regard, but there is effective test and examination preparation in most subjects. There are concomitant strengths and weaknesses. Pupils and students are enabled to build up knowledge and understanding in a systematic way, and to be confident in using the techniques required to draw on this knowledge and understanding sensibly. On the other hand, the teaching can become narrowly focused and repetitive.
28. Although there is no formal policy for the teaching of language across the curriculum, there is good practice in a number of subjects in the teaching of specialist terminology - often this is at Key Stage 3, in order to lay good foundations for later learning. In a Year 8 music lesson, for example, there was constant review and reinforcement of key words: the pupils were asked to demonstrate and describe ‘major/minor’ and ‘ostinato’. In a Year 8 art lesson on cubism, pupils,

including a few with special educational needs, demonstrated in their answers to the teacher's questions an ability to understand and use the language of art beyond expectations for their age. Reading is well used in English to extend pupils' appreciation and understanding of figurative language. Pupils in a Year 11 upper set studying a Thomas Hood poem showed extremely high standards of understanding. They spoke convincingly, picking up and developing one another's ideas. They were comfortable using terms such as 'hyperbole', and could define 'metaphor' and 'Elysium'. In most science lessons, teachers' expectations of pupils' ability to cope with scientific language and ideas are high. Co-ordination of such approaches across the curriculum is needed to extend further good practice such as this.

29. The quality of evaluation during lessons is better than at the time of the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, because learning objectives, which form the necessary basis for such evaluation, are made clearer to pupils. In science, the purposes of lessons are usually explained clearly so that pupils will be able to work independently on the tasks set. The more successful science lessons include recapitulation to ensure that the ground has been well covered and understood. Learning objectives in English, mathematics, geography, history, physical education and art, for example, are generally clear and shared with the pupils, and form a good basis for evaluation during the lesson. In design and technology, questioning is used well by most teachers to reinforce understanding. There is much good practice in this regard in a number of other subjects, including music and English.
30. Even in satisfactory and many good lessons, there are, however, continuing weaknesses, which require attention because they reduce the quality of pupils' learning. In part, such weaknesses do not receive enough attention because there is no co-ordinated approach to the monitoring of teaching across the curriculum. The school has not yet established an agreed understanding of what constitutes 'effective' teaching. Weaknesses include some rather casual management of pupils' concentration, particularly in lower-attaining classes, in science and English for example. Class discussion is sometimes not as well managed as it should be, and opportunities for tightly structured discussion in pairs and groups are often missed. Teachers quite frequently talk for too long, and this reinforces the passivity and reluctance to take part in discussion that affects a minority of pupils at both key stages. This is a weakness in the learning that requires early attention across the curriculum. Questioning is sometimes not used carefully enough to make sure that pupils are building on existing knowledge and understanding. In mathematics in Years 7 and 8, for instance, work quite often repeats material already covered at Key Stage 2. In a range of subjects, opportunities for learning through the use of information and communications technology are missed. The resources centre is rarely used well to develop pupils' research and retrieval skills. Further progress is needed in differentiating work appropriately, and, at Key Stages 3 and 4, in encouraging independent learning. Despite the weaknesses, it remains true that, overall, strengths clearly outweigh weaknesses in both the teaching and learning.
31. Good marking is more widespread than at the time of the last inspection, although it remains perfunctory in some mathematics and information and communications technology classes. In English, science, history, design and technology, art and geography, marking is usually thoughtful, with indications for improvement, although these are rarely directed at language usage or accuracy, even in spelling. Assessment as a feature of discussion between pupils and the teacher is of good quality in English, design and technology, drama and art. Self-assessment by pupils plays a relatively small role in marking in most subjects, although there is good practice in art. In physical education lessons, despite the requirements of the National Curriculum in this context, pupils have too few opportunities to assess their own and one another's work.
32. The great majority of parents, and most pupils, feel that homework is well managed overall, and that it is an important means of extending learning beyond the classroom. The school helps in this regard by ensuring that homework diaries are well kept, and by providing homework 'clubs'. Observation of lessons showed that homework is often a genuine extension to work in the

classroom, for instance in English, history, design and technology and science. There are some inconsistencies in the setting, marking and follow up of homework, as some parents pointed out, and occasionally homework is trivial in nature, or too demanding for the time allowed. The range of attainment in a class is sometimes given insufficient consideration in the setting of homework. On balance, however, and despite the inconsistencies, homework serves to promote pupils' learning effectively.

33. The quality of learning by pupils with special educational needs is never less than satisfactory, and is often good. When pupils are in small groups based on attainment or when there is an in-class-support teacher, the needs of pupils are met well. In large classes containing a wide range of attainment, teachers show sensitivity to the problems experienced by pupils with special needs and work hard to help them overcome their difficulties. However, there are occasions when teachers lack the skills needed to provide appropriate learning experiences for these pupils. The contribution made by volunteer sixth formers to the paired reading scheme is of great value. The younger pupils are very appreciative of the help they receive from the older students, who provide very good role models and do much to engender positive attitudes towards reading and books.
34. Pupils learning English as an additional language are well taught. The impact of the teaching is evident in pupils' good and often very good progress in speaking and understanding English, and tackling the contents of the National Curriculum subjects at levels appropriate to their age and attainment. The few pupils at early stages of learning English benefit from a mixture of in-class support, generally for one period per week as a part of a 'partnership' teaching scheme. One such lesson was seen in science, combined with extraction for language tuition, examples of which were also seen. It was noticeable that the three pupils being supported in science were in lower-attaining sets and, in at least one case, this was inappropriate. This implies that, as a result of language learning needs, high attainers may not have access to higher tier courses. This is an issue for equality of opportunity.

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

35. The school provides a broadly based curriculum in most subjects, but there are some deficiencies in design and technology, information and communications technology and music. In design and technology, the school does not have the facilities to teach food or textiles at any key stage. Time allocation to the subject at Key Stage 4 is not enough to allow pupils to complete a short course at GCSE, as required by the National Curriculum. The school organises the curriculum for information and communications technology through short courses at Key Stage 3, supplemented by modules within subjects. At Key Stage 4, provision is unsatisfactory. There is no separate course, nor the offer of a GCSE in the subject, and the contributions through other subjects such as mathematics do not satisfy statutory requirements. The school's intended curriculum for the subject is satisfactory, but its implementation at Key Stage 4 falls sharply short of intentions. Music is still suffering from the inadequate accommodation reported at the time of the last inspection, which makes it impossible to teach full classes in the music room. At Key Stage 3, only Year 7 has a weekly lesson and this has to be taught in the adjoining theatre.
36. In keeping with its Catholic foundation, the school makes good provision for religious education, which enjoys the same teaching time as humanities subjects at Key Stage 3 and is studied by all pupils for GCSE. In English, the curriculum for literature is well directed to the interests of boys, with the result that the entry rate for the subject at GCSE, when it is optional, is higher than that found nationally for boys. Science makes very good provision for pupils' different levels of attainment at Key Stage 4. Most pupils take double science, whilst higher-attaining

pupils take three separate sciences and lower-attaining pupils study for a Certificate of Achievement. Similar Certificate courses are used to good effect in providing alternative accreditation opportunities for low-attaining pupils in English, religious education and modern languages. As from September 2000, the school intends, wherever possible and appropriate, to enable low-attaining pupils to prepare for both GCSE and the Certificates of Achievement. All pupils have the chance to study two modern foreign languages in Years 8 and 9, and the modern languages department makes good provision for native speakers after they have taken GCSE in Year 10. The problem presented by some unsatisfactory timetabling of double periods for modern languages at Key Stage 4 has been partly solved by the innovative use of information and communications technology to broaden pupils' learning.

37. The school aims to meet the special educational needs of pupils, at least in part, through its setting policy, which starts with mathematics in Year 7, and extends to English in Year 8 and science in Year 9. Despite the extra teaching groups created, some of the top sets are very large in size, and the lower sets in Years 7 and 8 are larger than the school intended for September 1999, as a result of staffing reductions designed to cope with budget difficulties. The reduction has had a negative effect on the provision for pupils with special educational needs, particularly since there is little in-class support.
38. Pupils develop satisfactorily as readers and writers, but this is not the result of planned provision. Careful teaching of technical terms and basic literacy skills is evident in a few subjects. Generally, most teachers, in marking written work, take account of obvious weaknesses in presentation, and a few point out weaknesses in spelling. Outside English and, more generally, the sixth form, very little attention is paid to the style and organisation of written work. Reading is used for learning but, again outside English, reading skills are not taught. Pupils' skills as speakers deserve more attention, particularly since well-managed discussion is rarer than it should be in lessons, and a significant minority of pupils tend to be passive and silent. Much more could be done. Opportunities for further development of literacy skills are very uneven. The school has started the process that will lead to the creation of a school literacy policy, but this is still in its early stages. Consequently, staff do not receive the necessary support and guidance that such a policy can provide. A positive start has been made by promoting reading in Year 7 by providing book collections that pupils read in each room for part of the morning registration session.
39. Reading is taught well in English and the paired reading scheme during morning registration mobilises many sixth form students to support poor readers. Extra support in class is targeted at pupils with learning difficulties and there is effective specialist teaching for pupils with English as an additional language. Lessons provide appropriate academic challenge for most pupils and departments are beginning to develop learning materials that are adapted to meet the needs of lower-attaining pupils.
40. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. The limited amount of withdrawal for help with literacy is organised to have minimal impact on pupils' work and experience of all the subjects in the curriculum. A small number of pupils with specific learning difficulties do not receive enough specialised teaching focused on literacy.
41. The school seeks successfully to ensure that pupils learning English as an additional language settle quickly into the school and, in the relatively rare cases where they are in the early stages of learning English, that as soon as possible they begin to have access to the National Curriculum. Support is not generous, but it is well targeted for maximum effect. A few examples of unsatisfactory practice were seen. For example, the placement of a higher-attaining bilingual pupil in a low science set has already been mentioned in the report. In addition, there is some overlap between the provision for special educational needs and that for English as an additional language. The two areas share accommodation and some resources.

This is unhelpful, in that it may suggest to pupils and others that having a language other than English as a mother tongue is a disadvantage.

42. The taught curriculum is enriched by a good range of activities outside lessons. Many pupils benefit from the wide provision of instrumental lessons, bands and choirs organised by the music department. Similarly, the sports programme includes a full range of activities and inter-school games. The house system increases opportunities for all to take part through competitions and events, such as fund-raising for charity. In a number of subjects, such as geography and history, there are valuable opportunities for field study visits, which include visits to the battlefields on the Somme.
43. The school has a planned programme of personal and social education in all years, which includes talks by visiting professionals on drugs, smoking, alcohol and personal safety, and is satisfactory overall, and good in some respects. Sex education is reported by the school to be discussed with pupils in religious education in the context of loving relationships, and reproduction is dealt with in science, along with some aspects of drugs education. The range of the sex education programme is not clear, nor is it clear who co-ordinates it. The main programme of personal and social education relies on form tutors for its successful teaching, in Friday morning lessons each week. The lessons observed were at least satisfactory. Part of the careers programme in Year 9 was seen. It benefited from high quality commercial materials that stimulated discussion and made pupils aware of the wide range of employment opportunities open to them. Pupils have access to good careers guidance through an external agency, which has a full contract with the school covering many aspects of careers work. The co-ordinator of personal and social education also has some responsibility for careers, but the extent of these responsibilities is not clear. Areas such as guidance for post-16 opportunities need clarification, since there is evidence that some students may be taking inappropriate A-level courses at the school. The school has developed valuable links with the business sector. In Year 10 personal and social education, pupils were being made aware of health and safety at work, prior to work experience placements. Study skills linked to revision were the proper concern of Year 11 pupils looking ahead to public examinations.
44. The school enjoys close links with the Catholic community it serves, through local clergy and the foundation governors. Pupils are drawn from a wide area and many primary schools, which makes co-ordination difficult. The annual Festival Day in July is a celebration of the various ethnic communities from which pupils come. The business community gives valuable support to events such as the Year 9 industry day, Year 10 work experience, sixth form business education and the Young Enterprise projects. Links with St. Marks and Gumley House in the sixth form consortium are particularly strong and add significantly to the curriculum on offer to students.

### **Sixth form**

45. The school has redoubled its support for the consortium arrangements, in order to meet the challenge of proposed changes to the sixth form curriculum in September 2000. The consortium offers students greater flexibility over choice of subjects in different combinations. The result is that A-level groups are highly cost effective. There are no uneconomic classes in Year 12, but the English and economics classes are too big, with more than twenty students in each. The enlightened policy of crediting all students to the roll of their home school, regardless of how much time they spend in other institutions, removes any need to compete for students. Minority subjects such as theology, music and modern languages are provided within the consortium, and GNVQ courses in business studies and leisure and tourism are offered at both intermediate and advanced levels.
46. In addition to their examination courses, the sixth form students benefit from a supporting programme of general education, which includes religious studies and a general studies

programme of short courses in art, music, sport linked to the Duke of Edinburgh award, the Young Enterprise accredited project, information and communications technology and preparation for driving. A programme of talks covers important health issues. Students' personal development is promoted through the pastoral programme, opportunities to serve as prefects, attachments to lower school tutor groups, and a paired reading scheme. Through their social committee, students are active in fund-raising to support four sponsored children through Plan International. Regular progress checks on academic performance and attendance help students set and achieve personal targets. Students express their satisfaction with life in the sixth form. It offers them all the benefits of advanced study within a supportive ethos in which to develop themselves and contribute to the good of the school community. The sixth form common room, although not particularly large, is better kept than similar rooms in the majority of schools.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

47. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, as at the time of the last inspection. It is a strength of the school, deeply rooted in the Christian ethos of the school's mission statement. Although there is no school policy for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the headteacher projects a very clear vision of the school's values. He is well supported by his staff and, consequently, the school's ethos permeates its activities.
48. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Assemblies and acts of worship play an important part in developing pupils' spiritual awareness. Pupils often present the assemblies, this experience adding to their own personal development. Pupils also speak positively about their annual retreat, the Advent and Lenten morning prayers and the weekly mass. All pupils have lessons in religious education and enjoy the opportunities for discussion that these lessons provide. At its best, tutor time provides an excellent spiritual start to the day, exemplified by the Year 7 group that reflected on and prayed for those who were ill. Several boys talked about their visits to Lourdes within the context of the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes. Not every tutor time was of this quality with, on occasions, not enough time given for reflection. Parents refer to the spiritual value their children gained from a history visit to the Somme battlefields. In geography, pupils reflect on the beauty of landscape and power of nature. The art department has a clear policy for supporting spiritual development. Pupils reflect on the impact of music in their music lessons. Opportunities for spiritual development are also taken in English, drama and modern foreign languages, but are not fully taken advantage of in science.
49. Provision for moral development is very good. Teachers and other adults in the school are good role models, taking the lead set by the headteacher. They have high expectations of themselves and communicate similarly high expectations of the pupils, encouraging them to make the most of their aptitudes and abilities, and to overcome any weaknesses. There is a strong emphasis on moral issues in assemblies and tutor time. In lessons in English and religious education, there are many opportunities to discuss moral issues. In geography, pupils discuss topics such as the quality of the environment and inequalities in resource provision. In science, teachers stress the importance of the care of the environment. In the sixth form, the modern languages curriculum covers issues such as terrorism, war, pollution and family values. Pupils have a very good sense of right and wrong, which is confirmed by the responsible way they relate to each other and move around the school.
50. Provision for social development is very good. The pupils' support for charities and good causes is excellent. One Year 10 tutor group has a continuing project to support the Roy Castle Fund. There are Advent and Lenten charity collections. Pupils collect food at Christmas for the homeless and have raised funds for the Royal London Children's Hospital. Sixth formers sponsor children in South America. There is a clear sense of obligation and commitment to helping those in less fortunate positions. There are very good opportunities within the day-to-

day life of the school. Sixth formers help younger readers through the paired reading scheme. Pupils have many chances to contribute to the school community. Group work in drama, science, business education, geography and physical education underpins team work. There is a strong citizenship dimension in the courses in history. The school makes very good contributions to the development of pupils' social awareness through modules in personal, social and health education on drugs, the law and racism. Good links with the world of work and industry also add to the pupils' social development.

51. Provision for cultural development is good. Pupils study units of work about world faiths in religious education. In English, they learn about the different ethnic and linguistic influences on the English language. In history, pupils learn about Islamic civilisation when studying the Crusades in Year 7. World music is included in the schemes of work in music, though with less prominence than might be the case if the accommodation and resources were better. There are opportunities for visits abroad in modern languages and for the choir. There are trips to theatres and art galleries; a group from the Globe Theatre is visiting the school to perform Macbeth for Year 9 pupils before their end of Key Stage 3 English tests. In art, pupils study styles from other cultures including aboriginal art. The school celebrates its cultural diversity after the annual carol service, when parents bring food representing their cultural heritage. Readings are given in more than one language at the carol service. The annual summer festival day also celebrates the school's different cultures. The lack of an overall policy means that some opportunities are missed. However, the very positive relationships that exist between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds in and out of the classroom is a positive feature of the school's life.
52. All pupils with special educational needs enjoy the same access to all aspects of the school's very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and benefit greatly from their experiences.

### **Community links**

53. The school enjoys good links with industry and the community as well as a very good partnerships with parents. This judgement broadly repeats the findings of the last inspection and these links continue to make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. The school is well supported by the local and Catholic community and works to sustain and develop these links.
54. There are numerous successful partnerships with local employers, industry and businesses that broaden the curriculum and pupils' experience. The school is involved in the School Curriculum Industry Partnership and obtains careers services from the West London Careers Service. Year 9 pupils are provided with classroom materials to support their guidance work. In Year 10 pupils have a two-week period of work experience, organised by Project Trident. The provision made by the school through the contacts with external agencies is especially significant for older pupils undertaking work experience, taking business studies and participating in Young Enterprise projects. Representatives of the Metropolitan Police Service frequently visit the school to give talks on a number of topics, and the school benefits from links with major local concerns such as British Airways, Heathrow Airport Ltd, Smith Kline Beecham and Gillette UK. Guinness sponsorship is received for Understanding Industry. Industry Days are arranged for pupils in Year 9, and many employers welcome pupils into their workplaces. Members of Brentford Football Club visit the school along with others to give talks and offer advice to pupils. In conjunction with business education the school has formed good links with London Zoo, and at GCSE level with the Midland Bank and Chelsea Football Club.
55. Pupils are actively engaged in a programme of raising money for a variety of charities. Annually, pupils raise funds to provide Christmas parties for local senior citizens and for local people with disabilities. Other charities benefit from the efforts of pupils. For example, pupils in



Year 9 raised money for the children's ward at the Royal London Hospital, those in Years 7, 8, and 10 raised money for CAFOD and Year 11 pupils collected food items to help the charity Crisis with providing lunches at Christmas.

56. The school maintains close relationships with the parents of pupils with special needs and makes considerable efforts to enable parents to contribute to the learning of their own children.

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

57. The school has a caring ethos. As recorded in the last inspection report, the quality of care and support is mostly of a high standard and many staff give generously of their time to support pupils. Overall, the school's care for its pupils has a positive impact on the standards of education because the school provides an environment in which pupils can study effectively, know where to get help, and an environment in which visitors, parents and members of the community are made welcome. However, some areas that were less than satisfactory at the time of the last inspection remain unsatisfactory.
58. A particularly strong feature of care is the effective and fairly applied system for managing discipline. Discipline and behaviour are well monitored and staff are active in promoting a consistent approach to behaviour. The expectation that behaviour will be good is reinforced in lessons, during tutor periods and registration times, and around the school, as a result of the good example and supervision of adults working in the school. The school does not tolerate bullying and this is reinforced by a firm anti-bullying policy. Meetings between the heads of year and outside support agencies such as the Educational Welfare Service provide opportunities for continuity of care, directed at boys' personal welfare and development beyond the school day. Good communications between subject staff, the heads of year and form tutors help the school to keep track of under-achievement and unsatisfactory behaviour linked to work patterns.
59. Arrangements for looking after sick or injured boys are good. The school has appropriate staff trained in first aid procedures and a well supplied medical room. The welfare assistant is able to offer pupils confidential advice on a variety of topics, as are members of the administrative staff, who play a fuller role in pastoral care than in the majority of schools. For example, the senior administrative officer takes a leading role in the induction arrangements for new pupils in Year 7. She visits the primary schools, meets prospective pupils, collects information about them, organises visits to Gunnersbury before transfer and, once pupils have transferred, is able to take some part in the supervision of new pupils, and be available if they want help or advice, since her office looks out directly on the Year 7 playground. This area is reserved for new pupils, to give them an area where they can form and cement new friendships after joining the school.
60. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are unsatisfactory in some respects. Although the attendance policy is clear, procedures are applied inconsistently. During the inspection, pupils were sometimes marked as present although they were not obviously present. Checks by the inspection team to ascertain if these pupils were registered elsewhere proved negative. Registers were not always checked at the beginning of each lesson, as a guard against internal truancy. No written record was kept of pupils leaving the school after they had been marked present on the register, and it was evident that pupils were occasionally able to come to school without this being noted on any form of register. There are, however, good procedures for monitoring punctuality. The use of a computerised system makes it easier for the school to monitor attendance and punctuality.
61. Child protection procedures are unsatisfactory. There is no school policy. Although there is a designated teacher responsible for this area of pupil care, the present situation does not comply with statutory regulations. The school reports that it is waiting for 'information and a book' to enable it to come into line with LEA procedures, now that it is no longer grant-maintained.

Current practice is to delegate responsibility further, to an untrained member of the non-teaching staff, who informs outside authorities of the need to consider any potential problems. No written records are kept. Members of staff other than the designated teacher have not received training in child protection procedures.

62. There is a health and safety policy monitored by staff and governors; but a number of issues needing attention were evident during the inspection. Senior boys reported that access to the school toilets is usually restricted. A temporary classroom contained a loose radiator and a dangerous top to a table. In the music department, it was noted that the practice rooms cannot be viewed from inside the building, that it is difficult to open one of the doors, and that in the adjoining drama studio the lighting walkway has no safety rail at the end.
63. Fire evacuation procedures are satisfactory. Mustering instructions in case of emergencies are displayed around the school. National help lines and other useful information are clearly on display in a central location. The school canteen is open to provide boys with cooked food at morning break as well as lunchtime.
64. The school's educational and personal support and guidance are effective in raising pupils' achievements. Tutors and their heads of year work together to keep track of pupils' development and learning. The pilot scheme of homework diaries in Years 7 and 9 is proving successful as a means of allowing pupils to set targets for personal development, to revise these regularly, and for pupils, parents and tutors to monitor progress. The house system provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development through identification with the values and achievements of their house. The system of rewards and sanctions is understood and appreciated by pupils, especially in the lower years. Through good liaison with the contributory primary schools, Gunnersbury is able to know something of pupils before they transfer. Staff build on this information to provide a programme of comprehensive personal support for those new to the school.
65. By each taking particular responsibility for a group of pupils, the special needs staff make a very valuable and positive additional contribution to the all-round welfare of pupils with special educational needs.

## **Assessment**

66. The school has a well-established and successful tradition of monitoring the progress of individual pupils on the basis of assessments of their attainment on entry to the school, and predictions of their likely performance at the end of Key Stage 3, at GCSE and in the sixth form. These procedures are well organised by a deputy headteacher, but they are not used with sufficient precision to support the development of targets for departments or to provide objectives for individual pupils, except in the sixth form. They are, nevertheless, an important tool for raising standards, and are recognised as such within departments. Target setting for departments is organised through regular review meetings between individual heads of department and the headteacher. There is, however, no formal arrangement to ensure that these targets complement and match the overall targets the school is required statutorily to set for GCSE.
67. The school meets National Curriculum requirements for assessment except in information and communications technology at Key Stage 4, where practice is unsatisfactory. Teachers' keeping of records is generally good, and most pupils receive regular and helpful information about how well they are doing. However, this information is based on retrospective analyses of performance, rather than targets for the future. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are not usually aware of the National Curriculum Levels or GCSE grades they should be aiming at. The quality of assessment varies considerably across departments, although practice is mainly good in terms of regularity, accuracy, record keeping and advice to pupils. The main weaknesses are in the

use of assessment data to support curricular planning and teaching (although there is good practice in science and modern languages, for example); in a lack of well-organised moderation to ensure consistency within and across departments; and in irregularities in the reports to parents, where information from pupils' assessment profiles is not used to provide sharp and easily understood indications of attainment, and where there is little information about what pupils need to do to improve.

68. A pilot scheme for monitoring pupils' personal development is operating successfully in Years 7 and 9. This involves regular self-assessment by pupils and negotiation with their tutors. The pilot project, although very promising and already helpful, operates separately from the arrangements for monitoring academic progress. The school also organises records of achievement, in conjunction with the LEA.
69. Much careful and productive good work is done in assessment, but the various elements of the school's practice are not yet co-ordinated or monitored closely enough, nor do they have a clear role in the school's developing arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
70. The progress and attainment of pupils with special educational needs are monitored closely by learning support staff. The detailed reports produced by in-class support teachers, together with the results of frequent tests, are used well to modify individual education plans (IEPs) and to evaluate teaching. On entry to the school, detailed information from the contributory primary schools, and the results of standardised tests, are used well to construct the register for special educational needs and as a source of initial information for the IEPs. Subject teachers provide information for the regular reviews of IEPs and of statements of special educational need, which fulfil all statutory requirements.
71. The language needs of pupils learning English as an additional language are assessed carefully on entry to the school and monitored effectively thereafter by the specialist teachers. However, the information generated by this monitoring is not used effectively in all subjects. In general, teachers are not well informed about the particular language needs of pupils learning English as an additional language, and in particular the needs of those who have a high level of conversational competence but still have progress to make in their control of written English. The school's developing literacy policy should take account of such issues. Very able pupils are identified informally within departments, but there is no school policy to ensure that all such pupils are identified centrally and their progress monitored in a co-ordinated way across the curriculum.

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

72. The school is well supported by parents and places a very high priority on sustaining and developing this relationship. Parents attending the pre-inspection meeting indicated that they support the school very strongly, and celebrate its achievements. Most parents think that the school is achieving good standards. As was the case at the time of the last inspection, the partnership between school and parents makes a very significant contribution to the effectiveness of the education the school is able to provide.
73. Parents receive a helpful range of information in the form of reports on pupils' progress, letters home and fortnightly newsletters. These are clearly presented and inform parents about events and issues, while at the same time celebrating the school's successes. The publications are complemented by the homework diaries used in the pilot scheme in Years 7 and 9, by parents' evenings, and by personal contacts, often in the form of letters, between parents and teachers. The quality of information recorded in reports is broadly satisfactory, but there is insufficient detail about what pupils need to do in order to improve. Both the school prospectus and the

governors' annual report to parents are helpful and clearly set out, but omit some of the required information. The annual report to parents does not include details about the ways in which funding for special educational needs is used. Parents' meetings are well attended and provide useful opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress.

74. The parents' involvement enriches the curriculum, because they make a crucial contribution through their active support of pupils' learning and achievements. The school can rely on offers of help at parents' meetings, school concerts, musical productions and, for example, at occasions such as the summer festival and speech day, which was held during the inspection week. All parents of new pupils enter into a home-school agreement, and there is ample evidence that parents are willing to use the homework diaries to promote the learning and personal development of their children. Parents visit the school when necessary to discuss their child's progress, and feel welcomed in the school. The Gunnersbury Association is very active and has funded many projects such as the purchase of a school mini bus. More recently, parents have contributed half the cost towards a project to convert the dining hall doors into patio doors, and they have found additional funds to support a grant to create a garden and seating area for the pupils' use. Many parents help in making refreshments and providing general help for routine school occasions such as parents' evenings and special events including the Speech Day. A few parents help in school, in the library for example, or offer assistance with school outings and trips abroad.

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

75. The strength of the school's leadership was recognised at the time of the last inspection. Leadership across the school was reported to be dedicated to the school's aims, and effective. These strengths remain. The school's values are reflected in all aspects of its work. The headteacher's leadership is effective in raising standards and securing the good reputation of the school. He is supported by an experienced senior management team, committed subject leaders, well-informed governors and a loyal and capable staff. There are, however, weaknesses in certain areas of management.
76. Nevertheless, much has been done since the last inspection to improve the quality of management. As recommended in the last inspection report and, subsequently, by those evaluating the school's successful application for Investors in People status, the roles of heads of department and year have been extended: those holding these positions are now more central to the school's planning process, a necessary improvement, given that heads of department and year have a crucial influence on the shape of the curriculum, pupils' attitudes and the standards of their work. The leadership and management of subjects and years are good in almost all cases, and constitute a major strength of the school.
77. This development has been accompanied by a reallocation of responsibilities within the senior management team, to improve its effectiveness. Line management arrangements have been made clearer and regular review meetings established, between the headteacher and heads of department on the one hand and, on the other, between a senior teacher with oversight of the pastoral system and individual heads of year. During these meetings, departmental and pastoral targets and priorities are discussed and progress towards them evaluated. The arrangements contribute strongly to the consultative style of management favoured by the headteacher and governors, and help to reinforce the shared commitment to raising standards in all aspects of the school's work. Other members of the senior management team, which includes two deputy headteachers and four senior teachers, also have regular meetings with the heads of department they line manage. These meetings are reported by staff to be useful in providing support and advice.

78. Teaching is monitored within some departments, with varying degrees of informality, but the school has no agreed approach to lesson observation for the whole staff, beyond the rather loose arrangements developed for appraisal and now little used. This aspect of performance management is under-developed, which may in part account for continuing, though less acute, weaknesses in aspects of the teaching identified as needing improvement at the time of the last inspection. Rigorous lesson observation is restricted to monitoring the work of newly-qualified teachers. At present, the balance in performance management is biased towards support rather than monitoring. Although the headteacher and governors are aware of most of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's work, including the teaching, this awareness is developed informally and is not, in itself, a means of securing improvement.
79. There is a strong sense of teamwork among senior managers. Day-to-day administration works well. The cycle of school meetings at various levels is organised appropriately and serves as a useful vehicle for communication and decision-making. However, most members of the senior management team are not involved sufficiently in leading the school's curriculum development or in monitoring its impact on standards. The deputy headteachers play a central role in day-to-day management, particularly in sustaining high standards of discipline and maintaining good channels of communication. They contribute less to planning, monitoring, innovation and development. The work of other senior managers varies in quality and significance, with important contributions to timetabling, management of the sixth form and oversight of the pastoral system. Areas of weakness in school management include the line management of some aspects of the curriculum, in particular the provision for information and communications technology, the monitoring of procedures for checking attendance, and the implementation of statutory requirements for child protection. In each of these areas there are significant deficiencies. In part, such difficulties originate in the absence of clear accountability. Job descriptions for members of the senior management team are not set out in the staff handbook, and are not generally accessible to staff.
80. Governors support the school's emphasis on achieving high standards and have a strong interest in its life, work and achievements. They provide consistent support for the headteacher and keep the school's finances under review. They have been heavily involved in strategic planning in association with grant-maintained status. The headteacher's clearly written reports keep them well informed about the school's work and priorities. Although the governing body is able and committed, governors take relatively little part in monitoring and evaluation. They have no close links with subjects, nor do most make regular and planned visits to evaluate the school's work. Governors are not fulfilling all their statutory responsibilities because of the difficulties the school is experiencing in meeting National Curriculum requirements in music at Key Stage 3, design and technology at Key Stage 4 and information and communications technology at Key Stage 4. Details of the school's use of resources for special educational needs are not given in the annual report for parents.
81. At the time of the last inspection, the school had recently become grant-maintained. The school reports, and documentation confirms, that the limited financial benefit from becoming grant-maintained enabled governors to meet most of their responsibilities in being self-governing. The school reverted to voluntary-aided status in September 1999, and is now experiencing financial difficulties. Governors report that, when compared with most local secondary schools, the school is financially disadvantaged. The inspection team confirmed this. Although, in national terms, the school is better funded than the majority of similar schools, its income is below that of most London schools of a similar size, type and location. Expenditure varies within the constraints of what is available. Spending on staffing is below local averages, and this is particularly noticeable in relation to teaching staff. On the other hand, spending on resources has recently been above average, largely because of the purchase of computers.

82. Governors, who did much to steer the school successfully through the years of grant-maintained status, should undertake a thorough review of all aspects of expenditure in the school because of its changed circumstances. In order to balance the budget, the school reduced its teaching staff by two, reduced the allocation of funds to departments for learning resources, reduced funds for in-service training and reduced the maintenance budget. The reduction in staffing has had important consequences in increased class sizes in Years 7 and 8 to well above the average for other years. This is making it more difficult for teachers to meet the needs of all pupils in classes containing a broad range of ability.
83. Governors have not yet carried out a close analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the school's policies and practice in areas such as curricular organisation, the use of resources for learning and the deployment of staff. Governors should consider areas where planning for greater efficiency might be possible, even where adjustments might provide only limited improvements.
84. The amount of in-class support for special educational needs is less extensive than in most schools at Key Stage 3, mainly because learning support assistants are not used for this purpose. The use of qualified teachers in this role, which the school favours, is an expensive option. On the other hand, in the school as a whole, the proportion of time spent teaching classes, as opposed to discharging other duties, although within the usual range, is slightly lower than national figures. This is mainly because of time allocated for teachers to carry out library supervision and attend meetings. Additional areas would repay further analysis. For example, the senior management team is slightly larger than is necessary for the size of school. The school, because of the necessary demands of grant-maintained status, spends a larger than usual proportion of its budget on administrative and support, as opposed to teaching, staff. In more general terms, the function of the resources centre needs to be reviewed. At present, it does not repay investment in that it is under-used as a support for learning across the curriculum.
85. Since the last inspection, the quality of development planning has improved, and there is a better alignment between financial and school planning, as was recommended at the time of the last inspection. However, priorities for the school's development beyond one year, and the financial implications such priorities might imply, have not been considered in appropriate detail. Governors point out that this has been because of major uncertainty about school income, approaching and during the change from grant-maintained to voluntary-aided status. Even though financial prospects for the future are not certain, governors should consider whether planning for a 'shadow staffing structure', outlining intentions for the medium and longer term under different sets of circumstances, would provide a stronger basis for strategic planning. This planning should include consideration of the distribution of responsibility allowances governors would want to aim at. At present, there are a few anomalies although, overall, the distribution is, in broad terms, equitable.
86. Financial administration is very efficient. The school employs a full-time bursar, and a recent audit confirms that the management of immediate expenditure is careful and precise. Care is taken to achieve maximum efficiency in purchasing.
87. The school is well served by dedicated teachers. All are well qualified and several have higher qualifications than are normally required of teachers. The range of qualifications is appropriate to meet all the demands of the curriculum. There is a small amount of teaching by non-specialists, for example in music, but where this occurs support ensures that standards are not affected. In most respects, there is a good mix of experience, gender and ethnic backgrounds. Teachers work well together and there is much mutual support. Management is sensitive to individual talents and the reciprocal confidence between managers and teachers is a strength that contributes much to the standards of work in the school.

88. Recent developments have resulted in some unusual features in the overall staffing structure. Almost a quarter of the teaching force has changed during the last two years. The distribution of teaching experience is now unusual, with relatively few teachers in the middle range of ten to twenty years' experience. Long-term planning for the future development of the school, ensuring a well balanced staffing structure, may be constrained by the existing situation. The distribution of non-contact time reasonably reflects the responsibilities held by teachers, except that the heads of major departments have proportionately less time for carrying out their responsibilities than most other teachers.
89. Non-teaching staff make an important contribution to all aspects of school life. The technical staff are well qualified and give high quality support to the science, design and technology, art and information and communication technology departments. There is no technical support in music where the curriculum is becoming increasingly technological. The limited hours allocated to the librarian may be one of the factors preventing the school from making full use of the valuable resources centre. All aspects of the school's administration and welfare systems that are the responsibility of non-teaching staff are managed effectively. Everything runs smoothly and the unexpected is met with equanimity and unflinching good humour. Site management and caretaking duties are very well discharged: the school is clean, free of graffiti and refreshingly free of litter – a situation that reflects well on both staff and pupils. Repairs are dealt with as promptly as funds will allow. The extent to which all non-teaching staff are encouraged to take a positive role in the care and welfare of pupils is an unusual feature of the school. They make a significant contribution to the high standards of care and behaviour that characterise the school.
90. The school's provision for the professional development of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, is good and much improved since the last inspection. The school received recognition from Investors in People in 1998. Despite reductions in funding for in-service training, the last review by Investors in People (October, 1999) confirmed the school's continued improvement. The arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers are particularly thorough. Similar care is taken with student teachers on Initial Teacher Training courses and with teachers new to the school. The school now has an effective system of staff development that matches individual training needs with the objectives contained in the school development plan and results in professional development that gives personal satisfaction and is of benefit to the school.
91. There are sufficient well-qualified and experienced special needs teachers. The present organisation of the timetable does not allow for the best possible use of their expertise. Nevertheless, within the boundaries laid down by school organisation, the management of special needs provision through the learning support department is effective and efficient. Accommodation and resources are adequate to meet present needs. The range and number of books for the reading scheme are very good.
92. The learning support staff for pupils with special educational needs are fully committed to the school's aims and all show great determination to maximise the achievements of pupils with learning difficulties. However, the school is unusual in having no non-teaching staff to support pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator makes an important contribution to teaching within the English department and is not able to monitor in sufficient detail the quality of support across the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs.
93. The accommodation is generally satisfactory. It has been improved in several important respects since the last inspection, and governors have made extensive efforts to obtain funding to deal with areas where it remains unsatisfactory. Continuing weaknesses have a negative effect on the curriculum and standards. Most teaching of subjects is now located in suites of rooms, so that team working within departments is encouraged and resources are more readily shared. However, some teaching still takes place in unattractive temporary accommodation.

The premises staff work hard to keep the building and surrounds free from litter - and they are successful. The main weaknesses that survive from the time of the last inspection relate to design and technology and music. Restrictions of accommodation result in a narrower curriculum for these two subjects than that recommended by the National Curriculum. As a result, pupils do not achieve good enough standards in these creative subjects. Otherwise, the curriculum is adequately provided for by the school's accommodation. However, curriculum decisions about grouping pupils in mathematics have resulted in classes that are too large for the rooms allocated to them: this constrains the range of teaching and learning activities.

94. Resources for learning within subjects are adequate in most areas. However, some text books are not in good condition, for example in science, and the numbers of text books are insufficient at Key Stage 4 in modern foreign languages and at Key Stage 3 in mathematics. The lack of classroom resources in music, noted at the time of the last inspection, still restricts the depth of study at Key Stage 3. A recent reduction in funding for departments to buy books and materials will put greater stress on those areas that are currently unsatisfactory. The number of computers per pupil is low for a school of this type and size, and the poor access to computers has a detrimental effect on learning opportunities for all pupils.
95. The recently created resources centre provides a pleasant environment for private study and research. However, the total number of books is below the average for a school of this size. The recent emphasis in purchasing has been on increasing and updating the fiction stock. In most subjects the number and range of books are inadequate, and many books are old. In history and geography the provision is satisfactory except that in history many of the books are outdated. The resources centre is very popular with pupils who use it as a place to do homework at lunchtimes and after school. It is well supervised during the timetabled day, by teachers who supplement the part-time librarian, and pupils invariably work there in silence. It is, nevertheless, underused as a learning resource across the curriculum and as such represents an inefficient use of expensive resources. There is no library induction course or co-ordinated teaching of research and retrieval skills across the curriculum. Subject departments do too little to encourage individual and group research by using the available books and electronic sources.
96. The balance of expenditure across the three key stages catered for by the school is good, apart from the lower allocation of staffing to Years 7 and 8 as a result of recent reductions. The sixth form is not a financial drain on the school. Spending on special educational needs has been reduced to achieve savings, but the available money is used appropriately in the context of the school's policy concerning support. The funding is not, however, sufficient to sustain the original intention to restrict the size of the lowest-attaining groups at Key Stage 3, in order to achieve a better match between teaching and pupils' needs.
97. If one takes account of the educational standards achieved, the very good behaviour and relationships, the good personal development of pupils, and the quality of education that the school provides in relation to its context and budget, the school gives good value for money, as it did at the time of the last inspection.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The following areas of concern should form the basis of the governors' post-inspection action plan for further improvement:

**Standards:** Raise standards in information and communications technology at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.  
Ensure that the resources centre is used more efficiently and effectively as a support for pupils' learning across the curriculum.  
Complete the development and implementation of a policy for literacy across the curriculum; monitor the effectiveness of this policy.  
*See paragraphs: 13, 28, 35, 38, 84, 95, 160-169*

**Teaching:** Improve further the quality of teaching; increase the amount of very good and excellent teaching, particularly with average and lower-attaining classes. Ensure that the monitoring of teaching and learning across the curriculum is more rigorous.  
*See paragraphs: 23-34, 30, 78.*

**Governors:** Ensure that governors play a clearer role in monitoring and evaluation by:  
Establishing closer links with staff in key positions.  
Ensure that best use is made of available funding, and that, as far as is feasible, plans are clear for future spending priorities in all areas, including the curriculum, staffing, accommodation and resources.  
*See paragraphs: 80, 82, 83, 84, 85.*

**Management:** Evaluate and improve the roles and effectiveness of senior management, with particular attention to:  
line management and monitoring, and their impact on raising standards;  
the responsibilities of the deputy headteachers;  
the need for published job descriptions, as a basis for accountability;  
the procedures for monitoring attendance and implementing statutory requirements for child protection.  
*See paragraphs: 60, 61, 79.*

**Curriculum:** Meet statutory requirements for information and communications technology at Key Stage 4.  
Meet statutory requirements for the teaching of music and design and technology, by:  
improving the facilities for music;  
improving the curriculum for design and technology at Key Stage 4;  
providing, as resources allow, for food technology and textiles.  
*See paragraphs: 35, 93, 142, 147, 162, 180.*

### **Accommodation and resources:**

Seek early improvements to the accommodation in areas where it is unsatisfactory, and further improvement in the provision of computers.  
*See paragraphs: 93, 94.*

**In addition, the following less central issues should be considered for possible inclusion in the governors' action plan:**

- a. Continue to improve the quality of assessment and target setting. (Paras: 66, 67)
- b. Review guidance arrangements for post-16 courses, to ensure that students receive realistic and appropriate advice about A-level opportunities. (Paras: 7, 43)
- c. Meet more effectively the needs of the lowest attainers in reading (Para. 40)

- d. Mitigate as soon as possible the effects of large classes in Years 7 and 8 on the learning of low-attaining pupils. (Para. 37)
- e. Improve the quality of reports to parents, so that they give clear indications of what pupils need to do to improve. (Paras: 67, 69, 73)
- g. Draw up a policy for the identification of and provision for gifted and very talented pupils. (Para. 71)
- h. Ensure that all teachers are better informed about the language learning needs of pupils with English as an additional language who are at the more advanced stages of learning English. (Para. 71)
- i. Ensure that the annual report by governors to parents includes all the necessary elements. (Para. 73)
- j. Take account of the minor safety issues referred to in the report (Para. 62)
- k. Seek to provide separate teaching areas for pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language. (Para. 41)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	180
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	70

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	16.5	53	25.5	2	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	899	167
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	200	--
<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	--
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	86	--
<b>English as an additional language</b>		No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language		344
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>		No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission		25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving		25

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	8.9
National comparative data	7.9

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	174	0	174

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	123	118	118
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	123	118	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71	68	68
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20	41	28
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	111	122	117
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	111	122	117
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64	70	67
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22	47	29
	National	31	37	28

**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	164	0	164

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	90	146	160
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	90	146	160
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	55	89	98
	National (Boys)	42.6	86.4	93.9

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39
	National (Boys)	35.4

***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	64	7

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	15.8	10.6	15.1	3.9	N/A	3.9
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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	78.6
	National	72.9

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	79
Black – African heritage	53
Black – other	11
Indian	13
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	5
White	806
Any other minority ethnic group	80

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	8	6
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	229

***Financial information***

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	2828159
Total expenditure	2820695
Expenditure per pupil	2689
Balance brought forward from previous year	485
Balance carried forward to next year	7949

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.5
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13]**

Key Stage 3	25.6
Key Stage 4	21.2

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1066
Number of questionnaires returned	218

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	42	3	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	36	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	50	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	41	11	2	0
The teaching is good.	58	39	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	39	10	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	30	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	21	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	42	7	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	62	34	0	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	37	6	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	43	13	6	8



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

### **ENGLISH**

98. Pupils enter the school with above average, and rising, standards of attainment in English. Since the last inspection, standards have improved at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above the national average for boys and this represents good achievement in relation to the boys' standards on entry.
99. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 tests, attainment matched the national average for all pupils and was well above the national average for boys. Attainment was also well above the average for schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In national terms, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 6 was lower than the proportion reaching the expected Level 5. Teacher assessments broadly confirmed these standards. Over the three years 1996-99, taken together, results were close to the national average and above the national average for boys. The trend in results has been an improving one, but slower than the national improvement. Compared with national figures for boys, results in English are close to those in science and better than those in mathematics.
100. In written work and in lessons, most of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 reach or exceed the standard expected nationally; most pupils achieve satisfactorily, in line with their previous attainment. Some do better than this, reaching standards that are higher, in relative terms, than their earlier Key Stage 2 test results. The progress of those who do not reach the expected level, including those with special educational needs, represents satisfactory achievement given their earlier attainment. Overall, standards of speaking and listening are above expectations. Most pupils speak appropriately in different contexts and have a good control of Standard English. They listen attentively to each other and to their teachers. Standards of reading are also above expectations. Higher attainers read with fluent expression and show insight into the characters and events of challenging texts such as 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. Middle-attaining pupils understand the main features of health and safety leaflets and distinguish between factual and persuasive language. A few pupils are well below expected standards, with weaknesses in fluency and comprehension. Writing skills are above expectations. Although some pupils do not write with the expected levels of accuracy, most have good presentation, and accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. The highest attainers write with very high standards of accuracy in a range of styles.
101. At Key Stage 4, the proportion passing GCSE English in 1999 at grades A\*-C was significantly above the national average for all pupils and even further above the average for boys. It was very high in comparison with similar schools and significantly higher than indicated by the pupils' earlier end of Key Stage 3 test results. At grades A\*-G, boys did better than boys nationally by the equivalent of more than half a grade per pupil. These results sustained the significant improvement achieved in 1998 and represent good achievement when set against the boys' previous attainments. In the 1999 GCSE English literature examination, the proportion passing at grade C or higher was significantly above the national average for all pupils. At grades A\*-G the boys did better than boys nationally by more than one grade per pupil. These high standards were improvements on the already high standards achieved in 1998 and 1997. The department has a policy of entering a high proportion of pupils for literature, which underlines the good level of achievement these results represent.
102. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards at Key Stage 4 were above expectations. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve higher standards than would be indicated by their previous attainment. Good teaching that is focused

on improving weaknesses is a significant reason for this. Standards of speaking and listening are above average and well above average among the higher attainers, such as the group of boys who were extremely articulate when discussing a Thomas Hood poem. Well-constructed spoken contributions typified much of the pupils' work during the inspection. Reading skills are above expectations. Higher attainers deal effectively with challenging assignments such as discussing 'Macbeth' in relation to the Elizabethan and Jacobean idea of kingship. Although some lower attainers lack fluency, they successfully understand the main features of plot and character from texts such as 'An Inspector Calls'. Writing standards are above expectations. The accuracy and expression of the highest attainers are very high. Most middle attainers write with a sound accuracy and organise their work coherently in paragraphs. Some weaknesses in expression prevent some reaching the expected level. Lower attainers are below expectations but their standards improve, especially when they receive help on how to plan their work.

103. In the sixth form, the proportion passing A-level English in 1999 at grades A-B was below the national average, but the proportion passing at grades A-E was in line with it. The proportion at A-B grades was above the national average in 1998.
104. Sixth form attainment, overall, matches national expectations. About one in three students are above the expected standard. These pupils write fluently and can discuss the structure of Rosetti's poetry with insight and knowledge of poetic structure. Middle attainers have lapses in accuracy and their writing style tends to be less succinct. They do not focus consistently on the impact of a writer's use of language. Lower attainers do not include enough detail of analysis or quotation but, overall, students make good progress given the range of attainment on entry to the course.
105. The department makes no contribution to the development of the pupils' numeracy skills. Pupils do some word processing but there are not enough planned opportunities to develop skills significantly in this area.
106. Teaching across the key stages is good, sometimes very good and occasionally excellent. A significant strength is the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject, which develops the pupils' skills and prepares them well for public tests and examinations. Teachers have high expectations and reflect the ethos of the school in expecting the pupils to do justice to their potential. Consequently high standards of behaviour and concentration are the norm. Pupils take their work seriously. Teachers plan lessons well and keep the pupils busy. Whole class teaching is a strength as seen in the Year 11 lesson on a Thomas Hood poem. The pupils were constantly stimulated, enthused and challenged. Marking has many strengths including the frequent, accurate use of levels and grades and a meticulous, but well-judged, focus on what the pupils need to do to improve. However, there is not enough clarification of what the pupils have done well. Teachers set homework frequently. It extends and applies the class work, effectively maintaining the pupils' continuity of learning. There are some shortcomings. Activities are not always well matched to the range of abilities in a group. There is not a sharp enough focus on classroom management in the lower sets and in mixed ability classes, so activities such as class discussion do not always go smoothly. Although there is high quality whole class teaching, methods tended to lack range and variety during the inspection. When a broader range was used such as in the Sixth Form lessons on 'Othello' and the Rosetti poetry, it was effective and challenged the pupils' thinking.
107. The department has made a good response to the last inspection although there are not enough opportunities for the pupils to use information and communications technology. Schemes of work do not pay enough attention to this issue or to matching work to different abilities. Overall curriculum coverage is good however. The head of department provides good leadership and his team give him good support. Teamwork is the hallmark of the department. There is a clear focus on improving attainment, shown in the regular meetings in which teachers monitor closely

the progress of pupils against their predicted performance. Despite this good practice, not all pupils are clear enough about their targets and potential, and - more crucially - what they need to improve to attain them.

## **DRAMA**

108. Drama is a GCSE subject that has developed well since the last inspection and is now a secure and popular option. In 1999, the proportion of pupils who passed at grade C or better was above the national average. Since 1996 the proportion passing at C or better has more than doubled. This is good achievement given the wide range of attainment that pupils have on starting the course. During the inspection, standards seen matched expectations. Teaching is good, based on a sound knowledge of theatre skills and techniques. The teachers communicate effectively their high expectations of performance and attitudes. Pupils develop their known improvisations well and can portray character convincingly through voice and gesture. Their use of movement is less effective. Assessment is thorough and constructively points out strengths and weaknesses.

## **Speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum**

109. Pupils' literacy skills are above expectations and enable pupils to convey their knowledge and understanding of their work across the curriculum.
110. Speaking and listening skills are above average. Listening skills are high. Effective class and group discussion takes place in science and pupils give full answers. Year 11 pupils use specialist language effectively in their discussions about different artistic styles in their GCSE art lessons. In business studies, pupils have frequent opportunities to prepare and deliver presentations. Year 7 pupils clearly identified strategic factors about the location of castles during small group discussion.
111. Reading skills are above average. In geography, art and design and technology at Key Stage 4, and in history, pupils read fluently, many finding and understanding information effectively. Overall, however, research and retrieval skills are not as well developed as they should be. In history, sixth form students read widely about their course and Year 8 students read extracts about the trial of Charles I fluently. In science, pupils read short extracts from textbooks but, overall, across the curriculum there are insufficient opportunities for more extended and independent use of texts.
112. Writing skills are above average, although not as high as skills in speaking and reading. In mathematics, a lower set in Year 10 produced well-presented extended writing using clear English and appropriate technical vocabulary for their GCSE course work. In science, pupils develop a reasonably consistent approach to writing reports of their investigations, although, in practice, there is some variation in what teachers expect them to provide. Marking does not always point out errors, and relatively little attention is paid to English usage, except by English teachers. Nevertheless, in history Year 9 pupils produced some good writing about the causes of the Great War and some effective and sensitive writing about life on the Western Front. An important factor in history is the frequency with which Key Stage 4 and sixth form pupils write essays, and the support that teachers provide for planning. Pupils take notes effectively in geography and also produce effective extended writing and projects. They benefit from the opportunities teachers give them to draft and redraft their work. In art, Year 9 pupils wrote well on a discursive assignment about Impressionism.

## MATHEMATICS

113. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment in mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportion of the oldest boys reaching the standard expected nationally in the National Curriculum tests was close to the national average, and the proportion exceeding this standard was securely above the national figure. The average points score for 1999 was above average. The 1999 teacher assessments largely confirm this picture. The average points score over the three years 1997-1999 was above the national figure. The rising trend in results since the last inspection has followed the national pattern of improvement. Overall, results are above average when compared with results in all maintained schools, and are very high when compared with similar schools. The results, as measured by the average point score, are slightly weaker than the results in English and science. They represent satisfactory achievement when compared with pupils' attainments on entry to the school
114. Attainment in Key Stage 3 lessons varies. In Years 7 and 8, standards in some upper and average-attaining classes are below what might be expected, given pupils' prior attainment. This circumstance results from a lack of challenge in some of the work, and the re-teaching of material already covered during Key Stage 2 - for example probability, simple co-ordinate work, symmetry and shape and basic algebra. In Year 9, work becomes more demanding and pupils' achievement improves, particularly in average and high-attaining sets, and is satisfactory overall.
115. At the end of Key Stage 4 the percentage of boys who fail to get a grade at GCSE is well below the national average. The proportion gaining grades A\*-C is very high when compared with the national average for boys, and the proportion gaining grades A\*-G is above the national average. Results are much better than in schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The mathematics results compare well with those in other subjects in the school and represent good achievement.
116. This good achievement is reflected in lessons. The oldest high-attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 are able to tackle successfully aspects of the post-16 curriculum, for example partial fractions with quadratic denominators, and initial calculus. Their work is consistent with the highest grades at GCSE. Other pupils attain at or above the level suggested by their prior attainment. Many pupils in the lower-attaining classes achieve in line with national expectations. Pupils in the lowest sets achieve well in a graduated assessment programme. Many of these pupils go on to obtain GCSE grades, and this potential is reflected in their work in lessons.
117. In the sixth form, A-level results are below the national average for grades A-B, but numbers are not large enough for secure generalisations about the quality of the results. The proportion of students gaining grades A, B and C is, overall, close to the national average. A-level results have improved since 1996, and in 1999 all nineteen candidates achieved a pass grade.
118. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory for all pupils and good for the most able. The high-attaining students achieve well in lessons, but the written work of average and lower-attaining students shows a lack of rigour in presentation. Processes and final solutions are not communicated in a way that demonstrates logical learning sequences; in consequence, full credit cannot always be given to examination answers. This weakness needs to be overcome in order to raise standards further.
119. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress during both key stages, and achieve at least satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment.
120. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are highly committed and almost all the teaching is satisfactory or better; in over half the lessons seen the teaching was good or better. Most of the

good or better teaching was seen at Key Stage 4 where over half the teaching was very good or excellent and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. In the sixth form all the teaching was good.

121. The teaching has many strengths. The teachers provide detailed test and examination preparation towards the end of Key Stage 3 and during Key Stage 4. They are very efficient at enabling pupils to gain good or very good GCSE grades. Teachers have clear learning objectives, which they help pupils to understand. Practice with some lower sets at Key Stage 4 is particularly good: teachers present pupils with appropriate short-term objectives for mathematical processes and content coverage. They encourage the pupils to complete a section of work successfully in order to reach the next assessment point in a graduated scheme. Teachers have good subject knowledge and good understanding of the syllabuses and assessment schemes to which they teach. They manage their classes well. Teachers' expectations are high overall, and very high at Key Stage 4 and in some lessons at Key Stage 3. An example of very good extension work was seen in the Year 11 top set, where the teacher and pupils were taking delight in what they were doing, and learning was of high quality. Similarly, in a lower set in Year 10 the pupils were determined to gain a GCSE intermediate grade, and the teacher was seeking expertly to meet their aspirations.
122. Weaknesses in the teaching are most evident at Key Stage 3. Teachers' expectations are often too low in Years 7 and 8, where the prior attainment of pupils is not used profitably enough to build achievement. Pupils with a considerable range of prior attainment are often taught as a homogeneous group, and neither the work nor the learning style meets all their requirements. Pupils with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily and sometimes well within ability sets at Key Stage 4, and satisfactorily with support at Key Stage 3. All teachers mark to the departmental policy, but in some books the comments and marks are untidy and do not serve as a good model of presentation for pupils. Similarly, whereas carefully presented boardwork by the teacher leads to well-presented work by pupils, poor boardwork results in poor presentation and diagrams. Basic number skills are taught conscientiously. However, teachers do not make sufficient connections where a common thread affects different parts of the curriculum - for example multiplication and division bonds, fraction notation, equivalent fractions, ratio, trigonometry and so on. As a consequence, pupils' understanding of mathematics is not as sound as it should be. This contributes to a weakness in algebra, which the teachers have to address during Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
123. Pupils' attitudes are very constructive and their determination to learn makes a major contribution to their achievement. In this respect, they take responsibility for their learning. However, where the teachers rely on a restricted range of learning styles, which was noted at the time of the last inspection and which is still quite often the case, pupils' opportunities for taking responsibility for how they learn are also, inevitably, restricted.
124. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum except that there are no opportunities for pupils to learn mathematics through the use of information technology. There are good assessment procedures, but the use of assessment information, in tracking and target setting for individual pupils, and in curriculum planning, is under-developed. The very large numbers in some sets, particularly at Key Stage 3, considerably restricts opportunities for talking about and exploring mathematical ideas.
125. There have been improvements since the last inspection, and most pupils use and apply mathematics well in their GCSE coursework. However, there is still insufficient investigation and problem solving in the lessons in all age groups. The scheme of work is now more detailed and gives outcomes in terms of what pupils are intended to know, do and understand. This practice is now affecting very positively the lesson planning of some teachers; it needs to be extended to all. In classes with a wide range of attainment, the work still needs to be better matched to the needs of the pupils.

126. The head of department provides strong educational direction and is developing systems for monitoring both attainment and teaching, which are having an impact on the achievement of pupils. The department has the capability for further improvement.

### **Numeracy**

127. The school does not have a policy for numeracy. Standards of numeracy are in line with attainment in other aspects of mathematics. The mathematics teachers give proper emphasis to the teaching of numeracy in their lessons and teachers in other subjects both make use of and support the skills the pupils have developed - for example in calculating averages in science. The use of calculators to obtain the results they need in science enables lower-attaining pupils to overcome a lack of fluency in number, and most pupils doing this are able to check if their answers are reasonable. In design and technology, pupils are able to measure, calculate the circumference of a circle and produce graphs as required, and in art pupils are able to enlarge drawings using grids. A school policy and co-ordinated approach to the use and development of numerical skills would strengthen the coherence of pupils' experience, and increase their ability to use number effectively in a range of situations.

### **SCIENCE**

128. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with overall attainment above the national average. Attainment in the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 tests and teacher assessments was above average compared with all schools nationally and was very high compared with similar schools. Since 1996, the trend in improvement at Key Stage 3 test results has been similar to the national improvement, though pitched at a higher level. At the end of Key Stage 4, the school enters pupils for a variety of examinations. Some 20 per cent of the Year 11 cohort entered for GCSE biology, chemistry and physics in 1999. The results attained compare well with the national averages for the proportions of boys who gained grades A\*-C and A\*/A. They are similar to those reached in 1998, and above 1997. The 1999 results were below the average for pupils' other subjects at the school, though not by far. These three subjects are taught in the time normally allocated to two: in the context of this challenge, the results are a fine achievement. Entry to double award science accounted for two-thirds of the year group in 1999. These pupils reached standards which were above the national average for boys for the higher grades and similar for grades A\*-G, but below the average for the pupils' other subjects. These results are similar to those for 1998, but above 1997. In 1999, nineteen Year 11 pupils took the Certificate of Achievement in science and gained considerable success: 14 were awarded distinctions and five, merits. At A-level in 1999, seven pupils entered for biology, ten for chemistry and nine for physics. Passes were attained in 25 out of the 26 entries, of which 13 were at grades A or B, with both chemistry and physics having half their results in these top grades. Numbers taking each subject are too small for valid national comparisons. However, these results are a strong overall performance at both grades A-E and A/B, and are a marked improvement on those for 1998. The overall picture is one of improving standards in examinations.
129. Throughout the school, most pupils respond well to the opportunities provided for them in science, make progress and achieve at least in line with their various starting points. This includes pupils with special educational needs, particularly when they are in smaller 'settled' classes where work can be more easily matched to their needs, for example in the Certificate of Achievement groups at Key Stage 4. In the work seen in lessons and in their written work, pupils in Year 9 are achieving standards that are generally good for their age and in line with the point at which they began the key stage. The most able pupils are starting to make headway with some early stages of Year 10 work, for example in working with chemical equations, while those of more average ability also are well on course to perform strongly in the Key Stage 3 tests. This shows that they have made steady progress during the key stage. Predicted grades

for GCSE in the three separate science subjects and in double award science, based upon the generally strong foundations laid by the end of Key Stage 3, are broadly consistent with work seen in lessons. Year 11 pupils predominantly are hard working and many produce well-organised science notebooks, some of which are exemplary in presentation and detail. Almost all those studying the separate sciences are working at grades A\*-C, as is a good minority of those studying for the double award. Work seen in Year 10 of pupils working for the Certificate of Achievement indicates these pupils' very positive attitudes and determination to succeed. These pupils made good progress, for example, during a lesson on solubility when they carefully used equipment to study different mixtures. At A-level, achievements vary, though some students in each of biology, chemistry and physics are reaching standards that are above expectations and at least in line with their previous GCSE results. Year 12 students, for example, grappled with understanding complex electrical circuits in a practical investigation of capacitors and made effective use of information and communications technology to present and analyse their findings. Despite this generally good picture throughout the school, there is a minority of pupils who have unsatisfactory attitudes to work and do not try hard enough, but these are very much in the minority. The great majority of pupils are hard working and their behaviour is generally good or better, and is sometimes exemplary. However, even many of these pupils are rather passive in lessons: while they work diligently, they rarely ask questions to show that they are really thinking about the work and that they are developing their skills as independent learners.

130. In the sample of lessons visited, the quality of pupils' learning varied from satisfactory to very good, and reflected the quality of teaching. Teaching was good overall, and ranged from satisfactory to very good. It was good or very good in three quarters of the lessons observed, with no significant differences between the key stages. Strengths which help pupils to learn well, relate to the following: secure subject knowledge, up to the demands of A-level, so that teaching is authoritative and pupils are challenged to learn; friendly and businesslike relationships with pupils, leading to a strong focus on hard work; a good variety of activities so that pupils' interest is gained and held throughout the lesson – included among these activities is questioning which gets pupils thinking and deepens their understanding; effective use of resources, with laboratory technicians playing a key role in ensuring that lessons involving practical work can get underway promptly; the purpose of lessons is explained to pupils with the result that they know what to do and can work independently through the set tasks; good quality marking of pupils' work which tells them how they are doing and gives them guidance on how to improve; homework that is well integrated with the lessons and gives the opportunity for pupils to continue to learn between lessons; and a strong emphasis on safe working practices in the laboratories. Where teaching showed all or most of these features, pupils learnt at a good pace, worked hard and took pride in their achievements. However, not all the lessons seen were of such good quality, and some weaknesses exist.
131. Weaker aspects of teaching, seen to different extents in several lessons which were generally satisfactory or even good, are: some ineffective management of pupils' concentration so that not all of them made enough effort to learn; insufficient questioning of pupils that did not always ensure that teaching was based on what pupils already know and understand, or keep them thinking or help to consolidate what they have already learnt; while satisfactory attention is given to helping pupils to develop their skills in writing through science, some marking does not pay enough attention to correcting errors in spelling; much of the work is planned for the majority of pupils in a class, with the result that not enough attention is always given to the needs of those capable of working more quickly and those who would benefit from extra support or different resources. As a result of these weaknesses, some pupils do not learn as well as they might. However, the overall good quality of teaching is the main strength of this department and there is enough good and very good teaching to be seen there to help all teaching to rise consistently to this quality with continuing monitoring, support and further development opportunities.

132. The head of department, appointed since the last inspection, provides good leadership for a hard-working team of teachers and technicians and has ensured that the department has responded as fully as it could to the weaknesses identified then. He has brought about important improvements, particularly in standards. Underpinning this has been the thorough revision of schemes of work and assessment so that lessons now incorporate a good variety of activities that help to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Careful evaluation of the Key Stage 4 courses has resulted in three routes to Year 11 accreditation, matched to pupils' abilities: examination success demonstrates that this approach is working. However, little improvement has been possible with the expected use of information and communications technology in science because of the shortage of computing resources. In this respect the department has not moved forward enough since the last inspection, though it is determined to do so.
133. To maintain standards, and to improve them where possible, the department should remedy the weaknesses in teaching outlined above and continue to plan to teach information and communications technology throughout its science curriculum.

## **ART**

134. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of previous experience in art. During Key Stage 3, they develop their basic art skills through activities in two and sometimes three dimensions, using a range of media. They learn about the work of artists and art from different cultures and times and demonstrate growing awareness and use of artistic vocabulary. All pupils are encouraged to use their literacy skills to write about and evaluate artwork. By the end of Key Stage 3 they can use line, tone and colour confidently, and a significant number of higher-attaining pupils work beyond expectations. Standards are highest in drawing, painting and pattern work. For example, in Year 8, pupils were seen using tone and line to create high quality portraits. Pupils' practical work is often linked to their studies of art. In Year 7, pupils used pastels to create patterns based on studies of Aboriginal art, and were able to identify its distinctive characteristics. Year 9 pupils were at the early stages of making masks they would decorate in the style of the artist Fritz Hundertwasser. The use of sketchbooks to record and explore ideas is also developed satisfactorily over the key stage. The main weaknesses lie in three-dimensional work, where achievement is not as high as it should be, and in the fact that pupils do not make use of information and communications technology in the development of their artwork. In other respects, achievement is satisfactory.
135. Pupils achieve well at Key Stage 4. The 1999 GCSE examination results were well above the national average for all pupils, with 94 per cent of pupils gaining A\* to C grades, and a 100 per cent gaining pass grades. Since the last inspection, when GCSE results were above the national average, there has been a steady increase in the average points score for pupils taking art, and they now generally achieve better in art than in most of the other subjects they take.
136. Pupils in Year 11 reach very high standards in their coursework, with many examples of well-executed drawing and colour work using a range of media. During Key Stage 4, pupils' achievement is very good, and they make significant gains in their learning. Although some pupils rely too much on copied images, their skills of observation and recording, and their ability to develop and refine imagery, are well above expectations by the end of the key stage. They can, for example, create a series of colour studies based on their observations of interiors, refining and developing their images with reference to the work of artists. Pupils' awareness of art is further enhanced by gallery visits. Year 10 pupils were creating portraits following a visit to the National Portrait Gallery. Pupils make good use of a sketchbook for their homework and to record their ideas and responses to artists' work. Some pupils make use of the Internet and CD-ROMs for research, but do not make use of information and communications technology to enhance or develop other aspects of their work.



137. In the sixth form, standards are also high. Although A-level results at the higher A and B grades in 1999 dipped sharply in comparison with previous years, the results were good in relation to pupils' GCSE attainment. Most of the current Year 13 students are attaining highly, particularly in their drawing and painting work. Sixth formers' drawing and illustration skills show good development from Key Stage 4, and current Year 13 students are able to use these skills confidently to express their personal ideas and responses to varied subject matter. For example, one student had explored aspects of personality and developed imaginative and expressive sculpture work, while another was painting a large-scale study of the London skyline in oils, relating his work to techniques used by Italian painters.
138. Teachers all have specialist art skills and use these well in the planning of lessons that are competently and enthusiastically taught. Teaching is good overall. There is some very good and excellent teaching that succeeds, through demanding and well-structured lessons, in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of art alongside their practical making. For example, in a lesson on cubist art, pupils' knowledge and use of specialist vocabulary were progressively developed by regular questioning to check their understanding. Expectations are high for all pupils and the clarity of explanations and demonstrations of techniques help lower attainers in particular to make good gains in their understanding. Teachers provide opportunities for group and paired work as well as opportunities for pupils to develop their individual assignments. For example, Year 8 pupils worked in pairs linking their drawings and using techniques of Cubist art they had studied. Skills in drawing and painting are especially well taught, resulting in high achievement in this aspect of the curriculum at all key stages.
139. Teachers make very good use of verbal assessment and their written comments in sketchbooks help pupils understand how to improve. Since September 1999, the new head of department has introduced assessment and monitoring that involves pupils in evaluating their work and will further improve the tracking of pupils' progress. Teaching in the sixth form encourages greater independence and responsibility and is supported by effective recording and monitoring.
140. Since the last inspection, art accommodation has not increased, but it is no longer used by other subjects, which has improved access to the specialist facilities. A technician now assists teachers with the preparation of materials for two mornings per week. There is a good team spirit and capacity to succeed within the department, and art staff all have good organising and planning skills. The recently appointed head of department gives clear leadership and direction. Targets for development have been identified. The challenge for the department is to maintain the high standards sustained since the last inspection whilst developing schemes of work to improve opportunities for three-dimensional work and the use of information and communications technology.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

141. In 1998 and 1999, teachers assessed attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 as well below national expectations. However, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that attainment is actually in line with national expectations, and that the teachers' assessments are too low. Attainment is consistent across designing and making. Pupils' drawing skills are particularly well developed by the end of Year 9; their production of accurate drawings and cutting lists contributes to the development of numerical skills. The use of correct technological terms and the writing of evaluations and records of work contribute to the development of skills in literacy. Pupils learn to work effectively with wood, metal, plastic and card. They learn to use machinery such as pillar drills, belt sanders and milling machines safely and with some accuracy. They learn to use various techniques such as vacuum forming and begin to research consumer preference before deciding on a final design.

142. At Key stage 4, all pupils study design and technology, but only a minority take the examination. In 1998 and 1999, GCSE results were broadly in line with national averages. Results were better in graphics products than resistant materials, which is the picture nationally. Pupils' attainment in resistant materials approaches the standards expected nationally, but in graphics products it is well above. The oldest pupils at Key Stage 4 have well developed drawing skills and can produce plans, three-dimensional drawings, orthographic and isometric drawings to a good standard. The weakest aspects of their work are product analysis and evaluation. The higher attainers produce relevant, first-hand research, and this helps them write detailed specifications that result in high quality products which are suitable for the purpose for which they were designed. Pupils' results in GCSE design and technology compare well with their results in other subjects.
143. The numbers taking A-level examinations are too small for secure generalisations about the quality of the results. However, since the last inspection, attainment at A-level has been above average overall: all pupils who have taken the examination have achieved pass grades. The numbers achieving A and B grades has been below the national average in most years, but the work of the current Year 13 students indicates that attainment in the 2000 examinations should be higher than usual in this respect. Sixth form students' standards of graphicacy are good and there is evidence of some extensive and thorough research for the major projects. Standards of presentation of written and graphical work are good, and most A-level students make appropriate use of information and communications technology.
144. The pupils who study design and technology at Key Stage 4, but do not have the chance to take an examination because too little time is available, nevertheless have a worthwhile technological experience. In Year 10, they design and make clocks and some very interesting and original ones, with a good quality finish, are on display around the school. In Year 11, they design and make either a container, using various methods of box construction, or a balancing toy. They do not carry out much research, but do produce several designs before selecting the best one to make.
145. At both key stages and in the sixth form, the great majority of pupils enjoy their work and try hard to do well. They take a lot of care with the presentation of their work and generally take a pride in producing a good quality finish on the artefacts they make. They show awareness of safety and work sensibly when using potentially dangerous machinery. Pupils are keen to ask and answer questions. They work together co-operatively, sharing and taking turns when using machinery and tools. On many occasions, pupils helped each other, either by making useful suggestions or by providing an 'extra pair of hands'. Pupils listen well and follow instructions and demonstrations carefully. Relationships among the pupils and with the teachers are generally good.
146. Teaching is mostly satisfactory or better in all age groups. A third of the lessons observed were good and only a small proportion of the teaching was unsatisfactory. All the teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. They give competent explanations and demonstrations, which enable pupils to acquire a good range of skills and techniques. Teachers work well together and this ensures there is consistency of experience for pupils in parallel classes. All mark pupils work thoughtfully, ensuring written comments indicate how it can be improved and praising pupils where the quality or effort is good. Teachers are well organised and use time and resources well. Their questioning effectively assesses understanding and encourages pupils to be creative and find their own solutions to problems. Sometimes teachers talk at the pupils for too long without giving them the chance to take part. This causes boredom and frustration, which lead to lapses in concentration and fidgeting until pupils are able to begin their practical work. The teachers all keep detailed records of pupils' achievement, and they are aware of the need to use such information to award grades more accurately at Key Stage 3. The records

need to be used to write more informative reports for parents, and to help teachers match tasks more closely with pupils' attainment.

147. The department is well led and there is a very detailed and comprehensive departmental handbook that ensures consistency of approach. The curriculum offered is narrow because of the lack of suitable accommodation. At Key stage 3, the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements because pupils do not have the chance to work with compliant materials such as food and textiles. Statutory requirements are not fully met at Key Stage 4 because the pupils who do not opt for a full GCSE course are not given sufficient time to prepare a certificated course during Key Stage 4. The school is aware of this issue, which was identified in the last inspection report, but has not taken steps to overcome the problem. The school has not developed the use of information and communications technology sufficiently in design and technology. This also was indicated at the time of the last inspection.
148. The accommodation is very well maintained and the quality of display in the workshops is good and contributes to a stimulating working environment. However, as at the time of the last inspection, there is a health and safety issue related to large groups of pupils working in relatively small workshops. As a partial solution to this problem, the department has identified some old and little used machinery that needs to be removed from the workshops. This should be taken out as a matter of urgency to create more space. Several other minor health and safety issues have been notified to the school. Since the last inspection, A-level results have improved considerably. Teachers continue to give freely of their time before and after school and during lunchtimes to help individual pupils with coursework. This helps to raise standards and give pupils pride in achievement.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

149. Overall, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations for boys and for all pupils. Good gains in learning are made during the key stage, because attainment on entry, in geography, is close to the national average. Most pupils display good mapping, graphical and diagrammatic skills. They use six-figure grid references confidently, understand scale and direction on maps and most are able to construct accurate climate graphs. A minority, however, still have some difficulty preparing and reading graphs. Most pupils develop independent learning skills and practical field study techniques. There is good evidence in work on Italy showing a range of well-developed information and communications technology skills. By the end of Year 9, pupils display good knowledge and understanding of the water cycle, river processes and landforms, the causes and consequences of earthquakes and volcanoes, as well as issues associated with world economic growth in countries at different stages of development. There is good realisation of the relationships between physical and economic geography. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
150. GCSE results for 1998 and 1999 have been well above the national average for boys and all pupils in maintained schools. This applies both to the percentage gaining higher A\*-C grades and the proportion of pupils achieving A\*/A grades. The percentage gaining A\*-G grades is close to the national average, but average point scores are well above those achieved nationally. In comparison with their other subjects, pupils' attainment in geography is in the middle of the range. There was a significant improvement in results in 1998 and 1999. Observations of work in lessons and in pupils' books indicates that by the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of most pupils is also well above the national average. Most pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of problems facing the equatorial rain forests and the growth and changing patterns of urban development in different parts of the world. They write well in note form and in extended pieces of work and can carry out independent research. Some very good individual coursework, produced as a result of a field visit to Bournemouth, indicates good information

gathering, analytical and evaluative skills. Diagrammatic, mapping and graphical skills are also developed well by most students.

151. Attainment by the end of the A-level course is in line with the average nationally and with syllabus requirements. Most students have developed sound skills including note taking, information gathering, analysis of data and decision making in relation to geographical case studies. They have a satisfactory knowledge of coastal erosion and deposition processes and landforms as well as the factors influencing settlement patterns and urban hierarchies. Learning across the course is at least satisfactory, as a result of the positive and hard-working attitudes of the students and the good teaching.
152. The quality of teaching was at least good in 60 per cent of the lessons observed, with some very good practice. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers prepare lessons carefully, ensuring that subject matter meets the needs of pupils. In the good and very good lessons in particular, learning is assisted by the use of an effective range of learning strategies and by careful explanations of geographical processes. An example of very good practice was observed in a lesson on the classification of occupations in countries at different stages of economic development. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of mapping, diagrammatic, graphical and atlas skills. Teachers' knowledge is good and a suitable range of resources and up-to-date information is used in lessons. This raises pupils' interest and, combined with very positive attitudes from the boys, learning takes place successfully. The aims of lessons are shared effectively with pupils. Classroom management is friendly, yet firm. While no unsatisfactory teaching was observed, in a small percentage of satisfactory lessons, there is still an element of over-direction by the teacher. In most lessons, however, expectations and strategies are appropriate and pupils are required to use geographical skills and specialist language. Marking is carried out regularly and helpful comments and targets are usually provided to assist pupils to raise the standard of their work. There is a growing number of opportunities provided for the development and use of information and communications technology skills.
153. The department is well organised and managed. Subject policies and procedures are fully documented in a practical and useful subject handbook. The scheme of work meets National Curriculum requirements. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place but feedback to teachers is largely informal. The subject development plan has identified appropriate priorities for development. The provision of a good range of field study opportunities has a significant influence on the development of skills and knowledge. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in an implicit rather than identified and planned way. The use of carefully recorded and analysed assessments of pupils' learning, enables progress to be carefully monitored and assists the department to plan the curriculum effectively. In a small number of lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, greater pupil participation in discussion would benefit learning. This latter point was raised at the time of the last inspection.

## **HISTORY**

154. Pupils enter the school with a range of attainment in history; overall, standards are slightly above average. The attainment of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 is above national expectations, a profile confirmed in the teachers' National Curriculum assessments. The quality of pupils' work is evident in their extended writing on essay topics and project work. Year 9 pupils develop good analytical skills in their study of the Great War, explaining the causes of the conflict and the reasons for Germany's defeat. In a lesson on the Treaty of Versailles, pupils were able to justify their choice of possible terms for a fair settlement and then compare them with the actual terms. Their project work on The Great War is good, showing ability to research and organise information from a variety of sources, including the Internet. Pupils have a good understanding

of historical terms and ideas, as a result of the emphasis teachers place on explaining subject vocabulary. Pupils are also able to identify and explain different interpretations of people and events in the past. In a lesson on the trial of Charles I, Year 8 pupils were able to put forward the views of king and parliament on the authority of any court to try him. Year 9 pupils weighed the opinions of various historians to reach their verdict on General Haig's strategies to break the deadlock on the western front. The higher-attaining Year 9 pupils achieve a level of detail appropriate to a GCSE course on World War I. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, except for the weakest readers, who find the source material difficult to understand.

155. GCSE results in history are very good. Performance has been well above the national average, running at over 70 per cent for grades A\*-C, over the three years 1997 to 1999. In 1998, 96 per cent reached this level. In each of these years, candidates achieved more highly in history than in most of the other subjects they took. Key Stage 4 attainment in lessons is above national expectations. All pupils make good progress during the GCSE course, where teachers' expectations are high and the academic tone of the groups raises the achievement of all. Year 11 pupils reach a high standard of essay writing and source analysis. These skills are taught well and practised regularly over the course, often through timed essays, so that pupils acquire effective examination techniques. For example, in one Year 11 lesson on Gorbachev's reform policies, pupils gained further insight into how examiners mark papers by using an actual mark scheme and exemplars of good practice to assess each other's work. Year 10 pupils studying the effectiveness of Nazi economic policy were knowledgeable about the facts behind the statistics, and were able to compare sources to determine the degree of success in the policy. They show good understanding of the political ideas associated with communism and fascism in their study of twentieth century dictatorships. Pupils work hard in lessons and prepare their homework thoroughly. They respond well to the targets set by teachers, following assessments. They know how well they are doing and what they need to do to reach their objective in the summer examinations.
156. Results in history at A-level are very good. A-level results have been well above the national average since 1997, peaking in 1999 when all 13 candidates achieved grades A-C, with a high average point score. These consistently high results are a credit to the school.
157. In sixth form lessons, attainment is well above national expectations. Year 13 students produce copious notes and detailed essays on all the topics studied. They read widely and can put forward arguments well in discussion, substantiating their views with evidence. In a lesson on Hitler's dictatorship, students showed their academic ability by analysing successfully a documentary on the Third Reich, for evidence of two conflicting theories as to the extent to which it was driven by Hitler's deliberate intent or bureaucratic forces. Regular reviews of their progress by teachers and identification of action needed to achieve their goals enable students to maintain high standards.
158. The quality of teaching is good at all key stages and particularly strong on examination courses. History is a popular subject and pupils display positive attitudes to their work across the school. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Teachers combine expert subject knowledge with good understanding of the National Curriculum objectives for history and the requirements of the examination boards. At GCSE and A-level, they teach challenging lessons that make pupils think and give them thorough training in the skills they will need in examinations. Their assessment procedures are very effective for monitoring pupils' progress and setting them targets. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning on examination courses. At Key Stage, 3 lessons are carefully planned and well presented with enthusiasm and good humour. Expectations are high and able pupils are suitably challenged. Teachers have revised their schemes of work to include more learning materials for lower-attaining pupils in the mixed ability classes, but pupils with poor literacy continue to struggle with the new activity sheets and

historical source material. The schemes of work include a wide range of learning activities, but the balance in lessons tends to be weighted towards teacher exposition and not enough pupil participation. In each year of the key stage, teachers have successfully introduced a short module using information and communications technology to research a topic.

159. The high standards achieved in the subject are the result of good teamwork by three well qualified and experienced teachers, who, alongside their other responsibilities in the school, collaborate to produce new teaching materials and revision booklets, which have a positive impact on pupils' learning. The lead given by the head of department is focused on maintaining high standards by close monitoring of pupils' progress and by sharing good practice in teaching. Since the last inspection, examination results have improved even further. A start has been made on simplifying learning materials for lower attaining pupils and introducing greater use of computers. More still needs to be done to allow pupils the opportunity to show more initiative over their learning, through discussion and other methods, on a regular basis. History continues to be a highly successful department by virtue of its healthy approach to curriculum development and assessment, and the enthusiasm of the teachers.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

160. Pupils' experience of, and attainment in, information and communications technology prior to entry has varied widely from year to year, and a reportedly high incidence of home access to computers contributes to this.
161. At the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments in 1999 showed the percentage of pupils reaching the standard expected nationally to be significantly above the national average. The proportion exceeding this standard is similar to that in English, mathematics and science. Pupils load, save and print files competently; they use spreadsheets to create simple models and they enter data and create graphs using software tools. In control technology, they can build simple programs. During the inspection, Year 7 pupils were observed creating a range of charts from spreadsheets in a lesson integrated with French. In Year 8, they prepared slides for use in a geography lesson, drawing creatively on "clip art" and other tools. Some Year 9 pupils were observed at an early stage of using multimedia to research scientific information; others were beginning to understand the structure and function of a database. However, keyboard skills are generally poor and result in inefficient use of time and equipment. Pupils with special educational needs achieve at least satisfactorily and often beyond expectations.
162. It was not possible to assess the attainment of pupils at Key Stage 4 because there was insufficient evidence of work and no systematic teacher assessment is in place. No accredited courses are offered, and the school's intention to teach information and communications technology as a cross-curricular skill is far from fully implemented. There are examples of some good practice in history, geography and art but this is insufficient to enable all pupils to build on skills and knowledge previously acquired. Observation of pupils using computers in the Learning Resource Centre, and scrutiny of work in other subjects, revealed limited progress and frequently lower standards than the pupils in Key Stage 3. The school is not fulfilling the legal requirement to teach the full National Curriculum for information and communications technology to all its pupils at both key stages.
163. Attainment of students at post-16 varies widely. Students following GNVQ courses and A-level business studies regularly use word processing for the presentation of assignments and are at an early stage in using the Internet and CD Rom multimedia as a supplementary resource to support investigative work. However, there is little evidence of skill progression. Students following a Basic Skills course within General Studies achieve satisfactory standards relative to their prior attainment.

164. The quality of teaching in the separate lessons of information and communications technology at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form general studies course is good. Careful planning, clear learning objectives, appropriate support material, and teachers with high expectations of both work and behaviour contribute to the acquisition of basic skills. Relationships are good and pupils are keen to learn. On many occasions, however, opportunities to improve keyboard skills and to educate pupils about health and safety risks associated with the use of computers are missed. Where the teaching of information and communications technology is integrated with other subjects, as in Year 7 and Year 9, assistance provided for non-specialist teachers is invariably good, and a technician provides excellent support.
165. Pupils at all key stages demonstrate interest in and enthusiasm for the use of information and communications technology. They observe clearly defined rules, are co-operative and responsive to teachers and treat equipment with respect.
166. The school has recently initiated an audit of pupils' skills and experience on entry, but this has not yet been linked to lesson planning appropriate to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils with identified special educational needs are well served by close intervention and support, but there is a need to provide more effectively for potentially higher-attaining pupils, particularly through the provision of specialist information and communications technology courses leading to accreditation.
167. The management of information and communications technology as a separate subject is satisfactory. Well-planned schemes of work have been prepared within the Key Stage 3 curriculum, supported by appropriate teaching aids. Non-specialist teachers are provided with guidance and frequent in-class help. Monitoring of pupil performance is thorough, although marking of pupils' assignments is sometimes perfunctory. Development planning is closely aligned with the school development plan and conscientiously evaluated.
168. Management of the school's cross-curricular intention with regard to Key Stage 4 is less satisfactory. Closer monitoring by senior management of agreed strategies is required because constraints of access to equipment and training for staff are cited as major barriers to the implementation of the school's cross-curricular policy.
169. Since the last inspection, the school has taken action to improve its facilities and provision. Some improvement has occurred, but the curriculum does not fully meet the statutory requirement to use information and communications technology appropriately in National Curriculum subjects and to provide for all pupils at Key Stage 4. Resources are much improved and extended, although these are still insufficient in quantity to meet current and future demands, particularly in subject areas. Information and communications technology lessons are still insufficiently targeted at building on known attainment of individuals.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French and Spanish**

170. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their attainment in language related subjects is above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3 at the age of 14, the proportion of pupils who attain the expected standard in French is above national expectations. This means that most pupils achieve satisfactorily in French. The most able pupils are identified early and make satisfactory progress, while the lowest-attaining pupils respond well to the good teaching and also achieve satisfactorily. However, an insufficient number of pupils reach the higher levels. This is because some pupils who are capable of moving at a faster pace are not identified early enough. In Spanish, which pupils learn from Year 8, they make rapid progress and achieve

expected levels in only two years. Listening skills are very well developed because teachers routinely use French and Spanish as much as possible in lessons. Their speaking is of a good standard in both languages because teachers usually conduct rigorous oral sessions, often involving class repetition, and make a good deal of effort to involve the maximum number of pupils in oral activities. The highest-attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 are able to use the past tense when they write about their daily routine and leisure activities. They have good reading skills in both languages and teachers have high expectations of their reading ability. These pupils are given some challenging reading tasks and they respond well to this. Most pupils are able to write about themselves, their families and their likes and dislikes. Pupils' work in French and Spanish makes a strong contribution to their overall literacy. Lessons are characterised by a very high degree of concentration and application.

171. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 attain above expectations in both languages. The most competent pupils are able to write formal and informal letters in the language they are learning. They use past, present and future tenses confidently and are able to use the languages in a variety of situations. The lowest attainers studying for the Certificate of Achievement, many of whom have special educational needs, acquire a wide vocabulary and the tenacity of teachers ensures that they use it confidently and that they achieve well in all aspects of the language they are learning. Pupils across the attainment levels have very good pronunciation and listening skills in both French and Spanish as a result of teachers' sustained use of the languages in lessons. Although the pupils in Key Stage 4 classes have a wide range of previous knowledge, they all achieve satisfactorily because teachers tailor the work according to their needs. In the 1999 GCSE examinations in French, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C matched the national average for boys' schools. In Spanish, the proportion was above average. Compared with other subjects in the school, however, pupils did not achieve so well in 1999 in languages. Examination attainment in both languages has been consistently above average over the last few years, but there was a fall in 1999, which was particularly noticeable in French. The school reports that part of the reason for this fall was that some pupils were entered for inappropriate modules of the examination. Also, in French, a higher proportion of lower-attaining pupils opted for the subject.
172. Students doing A-level work in the sixth form attain expected levels. They write accurately and read on contemporary topics as wide ranging as religion, education in France and Spain, family life and test tube fertilisation. They also acquire a sound knowledge of the history and culture of the countries in which the languages are spoken. Most students are competent and confident speakers. The number of pupils opting for modern languages in the sixth form is low and consequently comparison of the school's performance is difficult. However, when students who studied either language over the last three years are taken into account, their attainment is in line with the national average.
173. Pupils in all year groups are generally well motivated. Most enjoy lessons and apply themselves well. They are keen to take part in oral activities. Their enthusiasm contributes strongly to their good oral skills and good pronunciation. Pupils work very well with each other when asked to perform collaborative tasks. Behaviour is very good. There are occasional immature interventions in some Year 10 lessons, but these are managed well by teachers and they impact only minimally on the success of a lesson.
174. Since the last inspection, teachers have introduced a wider range of activities and resources in lessons and they make better provision for the teaching of oral skills. Teaching and learning are good at all key stages. There is much evidence of very good practice. Teachers have secure knowledge of the languages they are teaching. They have high expectations of their pupils. For example, they insist on accurate pronunciation and often expect pupils to give extended answers in oral activities. The highest-attaining pupils learn well for this reason and also because teachers extend their reading and writing skills by giving them challenging tasks. They usually



plan their lessons well so that all Attainment Targets are covered and ensuring that vocabulary and structures are successfully consolidated in a variety of ways. They make their lessons move at a brisk pace, particularly oral sessions. This allows maximum involvement of pupils and very productive use of the time available. A particular strength is that teachers use a wide range of strategies to extend pupils' oral skills. This includes whole class repetition that is used to good effect at Key Stage 4 as well as with beginners. Very effective use is made of the language being taught for instructions and explanations. As a consequence of this, pupils acquire good listening skills from Year 7. Teachers make good use of homework to support learning in French and Spanish because the tasks they set help to reinforce and consolidate work done in lessons. Teachers have no extra help in lessons to support pupils with special educational needs. Nevertheless, these pupils learn well because teachers are strongly aware of their learning difficulties and set appropriate tasks. In addition, they make effective use of information and communications technology to underpin pupils' learning. Regular marking and supportive comments ensure that pupils at all key stages are aware of their progress.

175. The subject curriculum in modern foreign languages is broad and balanced. A strength is that pupils in Years 8 and 9 learn two languages and have the option to study both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The subject has strong leadership. As a result of this much is being done to assess and analyse pupils' performance as they progress through the school. This information is used to inform planning of work and the department is reassessing its strategies for entering pupils for the various components of the GCSE examinations. There is a need to ensure that the results of assessment early in Key Stage 3 are used to identify more pupils who can learn at a faster pace in French. Schemes of work are satisfactory, and ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met. Good use is made of information and communications technology to support learning. In Year 7, pupils acquire computer skills through their French lessons. The department makes good provision for pupils who are native speakers of French and Spanish. They are entered early for their GCSE examinations and they are then given appropriately advanced work to prepare them for their A-level examinations. Arrangements are made for native speakers of other languages to be entered for examinations in their mother tongue.

## MUSIC

176. Pupils come to the school with a wide variety of musical experiences and a general level of attainment rather lower than is expected nationally of this age group. Recent teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 have placed pupils' attainment broadly in line with national expectations: within this general position, a higher proportion of pupils than is usual is judged to reach the national standard, and a smaller proportion than expected to exceed it. Work observed in lessons confirmed the picture presented by the assessments and represented satisfactory achievement.
177. Although in national terms the numbers entered for GCSE have been on the low side in recent years, there has been a steady improvement with results at grades A\*-C well above the national average. The present quality of work would suggest that targets for a continuation of this level of success are realistic. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is good. Entries for A-level have been too low to make any meaningful comparison with national figures, but the most recent results have been in line with national averages. There is no longer an A-level course taught at the school; students who wish to take the subject can follow this option through the school's consortium arrangements. Music is a module within the sixth form general studies programme, but it was not possible to observe work in this area during the inspection.
178. The quality of the teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory, mostly good and sometimes very good. The most effective teaching employs a variety of methods and activities that are well-paced and challenging and matched to pupils' known levels of attainment. A good example

was observed in a Year 8 lesson on tonality, where time was managed effectively to involve the whole class, smaller groups and then pairs to integrate listening, performing and composing activities using a simple folk song as a basis, having first heard how a great composer had used it in the minor mode. Key Stage 4 teaching is more in tutorial style and demonstrates many positive features that makes for a good or very good standard overall. The impact of such teaching is reflected in the informal but workmanlike response of students. They are challenged directly and support one another both in talking about music using technical vocabulary, and in practical sessions such as one observed in a Year 10 improvisation session, where all-round musical skills were being developed through direct involvement.

179. The attitude and behaviour of pupils are consistently good and often very good. Pupils are able to organise themselves efficiently and there is little waste of time in preparing for and then working at practical tasks. Pupils listen and respond well and concentration levels are generally high in the context of friendly and respectful relationships. These are particularly noticeable in the instrumental and choral groups, which meet as part of the instrumental teaching and extra-curricular programme of activities.
180. There are three constraints which militate against the latent potential for further improvement and expansion of the subject. Firstly, at Key Stage 3, curriculum time remains significantly lower than that recommended and the half-size classes do not compensate this in Years 8 and 9. The scheme of work meets National Curriculum requirements, but this lack of time is severely limiting the breadth and depth of study and development of skills such as correct playing techniques for the electronic keyboards. Thus, performing and composing work is severely constrained and pupils become frustrated at their inability to play fluently. Secondly, although there has been some increase in the provision of keyboards since the last inspection, the general lack of sufficiency in range and number of classroom instruments restricts progress. In particular, opportunities for corporate work other than singing are limited, as are opportunities for pupils to explore the range and timbre of sounds in creative work. Finally, accommodation is still woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the curriculum and support music making at a high level. The main music room lacks flexibility and is acoustically very poor with much extraneous noise a distraction when other instrumental teaching or music work is taking place in adjacent rooms. Large Year 7 groups have limited access to a variety of musical experiences through having to have lessons based in non-specialist accommodation.
181. The department continues to be well led and organised, although there is still a need to cultivate curricular links with the main contributory schools. Teaching, learning and the overall standards of achievement are commendable in the circumstances.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

182. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Pupils perform well in a wide range of physical activities. Most pupils arrive at the school with only a limited experience of gymnastics, but quickly respond to the good teaching so that by the end of the key stage they are able to define their body shapes both 'in flight' and on apparatus, and are beginning to construct demanding gymnastic sequences.
183. Results in the 1999 GCSE physical education examination were well above national averages, as they were in 1998. The 1997 results were much weaker. Results have improved and now compare well with GCSE performance in other subjects. Large numbers take the subject.
184. At Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in lessons is also above national expectations. Good levels of skills development are clearly evident in a wide variety of activities. Pupils have a good understanding of tactics and strategies and are able to apply their skills effectively in full games. In health-related education, pupils gain an understanding of fitness issues and practices and are

able to maintain activity levels for appropriate periods of time. Pupils in the examination groups develop understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject.

185. In 1995, the school began offering its sixth form students the chance to prepare for an A-level in sports studies. In the 1999 examination, of the nine students who took the examination, all gained pass grades, and a third gained A and B grades. The number of students currently following the A-level course is high, at 24. There are, however, no opportunities for all sixth form students to take part in timetabled physical education lessons, although some of them are involved with extra-curricular activities.
186. Many school teams take part in a large number of inter-school competitions and sporting events, and gain much success, with some winning local and county wide events. Many pupils have represented Middlesex and some have gone on to gain national honours.
187. The quality of teaching in most lessons is good or very good, and is never less than satisfactory. All lessons begin and end in an orderly manner and learning objectives are clearly stated and understood by the pupils. Lessons are well organised and conducted at a brisk, demanding pace, achieving an appropriate balance of activities and offering the pupils a range of appropriate challenges. The subject planning is well structured with a choice of tasks that promote a high level of interest and effort. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and behave well and generally these expectations are met. Teachers encourage their pupils to be involved with the planning and evaluation of their work but, in order to meet National Curriculum requirements fully, this aspect needs developing. Teachers show care and concern for the pupils whilst encouraging the best in fair play, co-operation and competitive experiences. The quality of the teaching has a positive effect on the attainment of the pupils, and their enjoyment of the subject.
188. In all aspects of their work, pupils are highly motivated, learn well and have a very positive attitude to the subject both in their lessons and in extra-curricular activities. They sustain concentration, co-operate well and demonstrate an ability to challenge themselves. Behaviour is of a high standard. Pupils are very tolerant of one another's strengths and weaknesses. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in lessons, are given much support and encouragement by the teaching staff and reach a very satisfactory level of attainment. There is no evidence that these pupils are disadvantaged by the curriculum provided.
189. Many staff give very freely of their time to provide both a wide range of lunch time and after school extra-curricular activities, which are very well supported by the pupils. Strong leadership and a positive ethos characterise the management of the subject. The department's development plan identifies a range of appropriate priorities. The high quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work, and supports the teaching of the subject. Comprehensive records of pupils' attainment are kept, and they are used to influence curriculum planning, monitor performance and set targets for improvement. The department is very actively and effectively involved in the initial training of teachers. The staff who teach physical education work well together, support each other, and show a very strong commitment to the pupils.
190. Since the last inspection, the department has continued to provide pupils with high quality physical education. The curriculum has been reviewed, and it is now more balanced.

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION**

191. GCSE results in 1999 were below national average figures for the higher A\*-C grades, but above for grades A\*-G. The proportion of A\* and A grades was well above the national average. Analysis of targets for pupils taking GCSE in 1999, based on their Key Stage 3 core subject assessments, indicate that they achieved above the levels set. However, overall, pupils

did not do as well in business studies as in the other GCSE subjects they took. A-level results at the higher A and B grades were in line with the national average in 1999 and well above the average for boys and all students in 1998. In 1997, one student who gained an A grade was among the top five students nationally.

192. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, overall attainment in lessons and work seen, and over time, is below national expectations. Currently, the prior attainment of pupils opting for the subject, in terms of their Key Stage 3 core subject test results, tends to be low. However, higher-attaining pupils, particularly in Year 10, display a good knowledge and understanding of key business ideas and use specialist language successfully. This was demonstrated in lessons on decision-making and on the importance of teamwork in business organisations. Higher-attaining pupils are able to relate theoretical models to real business situations through the analysis of case studies. Lower-attaining pupils make slower progress in developing analytical and evaluative skills through simulations and case studies. Most pupils work effectively in groups, as was shown in lessons on stock control and the consequences of overstocking to a 'real' business. A very small number of pupils display a short attention and concentration span, despite the provision of well-planned and interesting lessons.
193. Towards the end of Year 13, overall attainment in A-level work and lessons is in line with national expectations and the requirements of the examination syllabus. Most students demonstrate satisfactory numeracy skills in accounts and when using graphs to illustrate business models and procedures. Students demonstrated good oral skills and in a Year 13 A-level lesson examining 'Lean Production' principles in western businesses. There was a high degree of informed and perceptive discussion, and sound decision making and good presentational skills were evident. Attention is now correctly being given to improving students' essay writing skills. GNVQ results, for the relatively small number of students on the business studies and leisure and tourism courses are good, with a high completion rate. In 1999, more than half the candidates achieved a merit or distinction. These students display a clear understanding of the required GNVQ processes and key skills, as well as appropriate independent research and learning skills.
194. The quality of teaching, overall, is good. A small proportion of the teaching is very good and none is unsatisfactory. Teachers are very secure in their subject understanding and knowledge and lessons are well prepared, with appropriate and clear learning objectives. Work is challenging and teacher expectations are high. Good examples were seen in lessons on the characteristics and problems associated with stock control and in decision making on the potential closure of part of a business. Teachers use specialist language carefully and accurately and provide clear links between theory and the real world, through appropriate and challenging case studies and simulations. In all areas, a good range of teaching and learning strategies is employed. Regular homework tasks are set and marking and assessment are carried out regularly and thoroughly. As GNVQ students were all on scheduled work experience during the week of the inspection, no lessons could be observed. But from inspection of students' files and the departmental documentation, it is clear that teachers act as very effective guides and facilitators, supporting and encouraging independent learning. Students' assignments are well structured, and an appropriate range of activities and learning objectives is employed.
195. The head of department is very well organised and the department is efficiently managed. Links with businesses are a strength of the department at GCSE, A-level and in GNVQs. The department also runs Project Business in Year 10, Understanding Industry in Year 12, and Young Enterprise as an alternative to sixth form general studies. A detailed analysis of pupils' assessments is carried out to help them make progress and assist teachers to plan work. Monitoring of teaching is carried out effectively, and the subject development plan has correctly identified the raising of attainment at Key Stage 4 as a priority. The GNVQ programme has

strong leadership and good teamwork. Programmes of study are well planned and are regularly monitored and reviewed. The key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology are effectively built into the programme.

## **ECONOMICS**

197. A-level results in 1999 were just below the national average for boys for the higher A and B grades, but above the national average for overall A to E grades. In 1998, the grades achieved were above the national average in both categories. Students are responsive and positive in their attitudes to the subject and attainment in the current Year13 is in line with the national expectation for boys.
  
198. Teaching is good or very good. Lessons are very well planned and a range of appropriate learning and teaching strategies is employed. The teaching is enthusiastic and, by the use of topical and interesting learning materials a motivating ethos is created in the classroom, despite the fact that very long sessions are allocated to the subject on the timetable. Good use of up-to-date information was observed in a lesson on restrictive practices currently evident in the motor industry. Opportunities for group discussion and for students to develop higher-order analytical and decision-making skills were effectively provided in a budget simulation. As a result of the effective teaching and the positive response of the students to the tasks set, good gains are made in learning. The subject is very well organised and schemes of work and subject documentation are meticulously kept.