

INSPECTION REPORT

PATCHWAY HIGH SCHOOL

BRISTOL

LEA area: South Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 109296

Headteacher: Mrs B Spenceley

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Chamberlain
7661

Dates of inspection: 8-12 May 2000

Inspection number: 186058

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hempton Lane Almondsbury Bristol South Gloucestershire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Howell
Date of previous inspection:	16 October 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Susan Chamberlain	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Rosemary Burgess	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern languages	
Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education	
Anne Bridger	Team inspector	Vocational subjects	
		Equal opportunities	
Anthony Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Special educational needs	
Reginald Fletcher	Team inspector	Music	
Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography	
Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information technology	
Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art	
John Tomlinson	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Alan Webb	Team inspector	Science	
Hamish Wilkie	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a popular, oversubscribed, mixed, comprehensive school with 1236 pupils and students on roll, which is bigger than most secondary schools. 130 students are in the sixth form. Pupils eligible for free school meals amount to 9.3 per cent of the population, which is below average. Pupils, except those in Year 7, come from families with similar backgrounds to those at the time of the last inspection, when the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals was nearer 15. There has been a change in the composition of the intake recently and pupils in Year 7 come from more local wards. Eighteen per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is in line with the national average. Three per cent of pupils have statements, which is above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with some very good features. It is very well led and teaching is good overall. Provision for the care of pupils and for their social development is very good. Pupils enter the school with standards below average and reach standards around average by the end of Key Stage 4. The sixth form is small but very effective. Although there are few high level grades at A level, students' achievements are, generally, at least in line with their prior attainment. They are able to choose from a good range of courses that are suitable for the whole ability range. A combination of good teaching and very good vocational guidance ensures that students in the sixth form usually reach their potential. School facilities are well maintained and despite some disaffection on the part of a small, but significant, minority of pupils, the school is effective and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership by the governors, headteacher and key staff is very good.
- Teaching is good overall.
- The quality of information to parents is very good, particularly the details about pupils' progress.
- Financial control is very good
- Provision for social development is very good, as it is for careers and vocational education.
- Pupils' learning is enhanced by very good community links.
- Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school and attracts students across the full range of attainment; it ensures that all students have an equal opportunity to develop at their own level.

What could be improved

- The strategies for managing pupils who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.
- The attitudes, attainment and achievements of a small, but significant, minority of disaffected pupils, mainly boys (who can affect others' learning and progress).
- The level of unauthorised absence which is too high.
- The provision of information and communications technology at Key Stage 4 to meet statutory requirements.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 1995 the school has made good improvement and is well placed to build further upon this. Changes in the management structure now allow for a senior teacher to monitor the academic progress of pupils. Teaching and learning styles have been improved. Provision for and management of information and communications technology are better. There has been a large investment in hardware and technician time has increased. Provision for religious education now meets statutory requirements. Careers' guidance has improved and the school has achieved "Investors in Careers" status and "Investors in People" status has been re-awarded.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

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

At the end of Key Stage 3 results in the National Curriculum tests in 1999 were below national averages in English, mathematics and science but are in line with prior attainment at Key Stage 2. When compared with similar schools the results were also below average. Between 1997 and 1999 results have followed the national trend of improvement. Boys and girls achieved similarly. In GCSE in 1999 the proportion of pupils that gained five A*-C grades was close to the national average and the proportion that gained five A*-G was below the national average. This was the general pattern for 1997 to 1999. The trend since 1994 has followed the national trend of improvement. In 1999 boys' results were in line with the national average whilst girls' were above. GCSE point scores were average when compared with those in similar schools. The school exceeded its target for five or more A*-C grades in 1999, but the current Year 11 is not making sufficient progress towards its GCSE targets. A level results are below the national average overall, but represent satisfactory progress from GCSE for the students concerned.

Inspection evidence reveals standards below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and in line with them at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, although standards are below national averages in external examinations, they are good in class if students' prior attainment is taken into account. At Key Stage 3, standards are highest in French. At Key Stage 4, they are highest in physical education, French, English literature, business studies and graphics, and in the sixth form they are highest in art, mathematics, biology and physics. They are lowest in history and music in all age groups and in information and communications technology at Key Stage 4.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are satisfactory.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory but there is a significant group of disaffected pupils, mainly boys.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory: this is because of the relatively high level of unexplained absences.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Overall, the teaching is good. It was very good or excellent in 30 per cent of the lessons seen, good in a further 46 per cent, satisfactory in 21 per cent and unsatisfactory in three per cent. Teaching is best in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3 it is most effective in design and technology and mathematics, and least effective in history. At Key Stage 4 it is most effective in science and modern foreign languages and least effective in information and communications technology. In the sixth form the teaching is most effective in geography, design and technology, modern foreign languages, science and art, and generally good in other subjects. Strategies for teaching literacy vary in quality, but are a high priority for improvement in the school. Strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory, but are confined to the mathematics department. Pupils with special educational needs are, in general, taught well, but those with behavioural difficulties do not receive sufficient, well-informed support.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory; it is good in the sixth form. It provides acceptable learning opportunities and fulfils statutory requirements except in information and communications technology at Key Stage 4. The school pays proper attention to equal opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress, except for those with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There is no special provision for the few pupils whose first language is Afrikaans but they are supported well by the general teaching staff.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is good and provision for social development is very good. Counselling services provided by some sixth form students and the school council are good examples of successful initiatives that contribute to this provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for child protection are good. The school cares for its pupils well. Monitoring of personal and academic performance is good, especially the academic tutoring at Key Stage 4.

The school has developed a satisfactory partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well, but have not ensured that statutory requirements are fully met for information and communications technology at Key Stage 4.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is extensive and very good monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and, in the main, effective action taken.
The strategic use of resources	The school has strong financial control and has very good procedures in place to seek "best value".

The school has not received adequate support in dealing with the number of emotionally and/or behaviourally disturbed children it is taking in and retaining, particularly in Year 7 where many more come from the immediate locality than in older age groups. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, but with some weak areas, for example religious education. Resources are good and generally much improved since the last inspection. Accommodation is very good and it enables all subjects to be taught in a pleasant and appropriate environment.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has high expectations of what their children can achieve. They feel the school is easy to approach to sort out problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They do not like the poor behaviour of a few pupils.

Inspectors agree with the views parents expressed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment. At the end of Key Stage 3 results in the National Curriculum tests 1999 were below national averages in English, mathematics and science for levels 5 and above and below in mathematics and science and well below in English for level 6 and above. When compared with similar schools results were below average. The performance of boys and girls at this point are alike. The National Curriculum point score for all core subjects was broadly in line with the national trend of improvement between 1997 and 1999. Standards of work seen during the inspection week were below national expectations.

2. In 1999, the proportion of pupils that gained five or more A*-C grades was close to the national average and the proportion that gained five or more A*-G grades was below the national average. In 1997 and 1998 the picture was similar. In 1999, boys' results were close to the national average and girls' were above but over the three years from 1997-1999 both girls' and boys' were close to the national average. The trend in the GCSE/GNVQ point score has been broadly in line with the national trend of improvement since 1994. When compared with similar schools the point score in 1999 was in line with the average. Pupils' attainment at GCSE, based on total point score per pupil, was well above average and reflects the high number of examinations taken by each pupil, normally ten. At GCSE the best performance in 1999 was in religious education and physical education and the worst in history and drama. Standards of work seen during the inspection were generally in line with national expectations except in music and information and communications technology at Key Stage 4.

3. In 1997 to 1999 at A level, the average point score was well below average, but this reflected the profile of the sixth form, where many students gained good grades considering their prior attainment. Standards of work seen during the inspection were satisfactory when compared nationally and good in the context of students' prior attainment. .

4. For GNVQ courses (intermediate and advanced), attainment was above average in 1999 in each of the examinations entered, especially business at both intermediate and advanced levels. Standards in intermediate leisure and tourism in 1999 were above national expectations and in line with national expectations in health and social care. Work seen during the inspection was in line with expectations in leisure and tourism and in health and social care.

5. English attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has declined since 1997 and is below national expectations. GCSE results are in line with the national average in the A*-G grade range but slightly below for the higher grades (A*-C.). This pattern is repeated at A level. Literature GCSE results are above the national average for A*-G and below for A*-C. The rate of progress in English increases through the key stages and becomes good at A level. Year 13 students demonstrated sophisticated concentration and note-taking skills during a study of *Hamlet*.

6. Standards of literacy are of a variable quality across the curriculum, generally below expectations, but strongly encouraged in some areas such as science. Speaking skills throughout the school are in advance of listening and writing skills. Reading is satisfactory. Literacy is becoming a high priority in the school and, to ensure its development, a literacy co-ordinator has been appointed.

7. In mathematics, at Key Stage 3 results in the national tests in 1999 were below the national average and were similar to those for 1998 but lower than in 1997. At GCSE in 1999, pupils attained just below the national average for grades A*-C, a significant improvement on the results for 1998 and 1997 which were below the national average. Work seen indicated that attainment in mathematics is below national average at Key Stage 3, near to it at Key Stage 4 and above it in the sixth form.

8. Standards of numeracy are unsatisfactory for a large proportion of pupils joining the school in Year 7. They do not have a good grasp of tables and number bonds. The mathematics department addresses this problem by having a general lesson structure that follows the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy with an emphasis on mental work to start and often end lessons. Pupils appear to enjoy the challenge of the games employed in these lessons. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics are used and developed in several curriculum areas. Pupils use measurement skills in design and technology, graph plotting in science and geography and general data presentation skills very effectively in both A level classes and in the vocational courses in the sixth form. Additionally, advanced statistical tests including significance tests are used confidently and efficiently in A level geography classes.

9. Attainment in science in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 was below the national average. At GCSE it was slightly above the national average in the A*-G grade range, but below for grades A*-C. A level results in the three separate sciences showed 18 possible A* to E grades from 21 entries. The work seen in lessons was in line with expectations for each teaching group. In the majority of groups progress is satisfactory unless poor behaviour intervenes. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in science when supported. Investigatory skills have improved since the last inspection and some very high quality coursework reports were achieved for GCSE and advanced level.

10. Attainment in art has improved significantly since the last inspection. From a weak base on entry, most pupils' skills develop well, particularly in the non-painting/drawing areas. Girls' attainment matches expectations but many boys fall well below, making overall attainment still below average overall by the end of Key Stage 3. Year 10 attainment is higher than Year 11 currently. Standards in the sixth form are very good.

11. In business studies, attainment at Key Stage 4 was above average in 1999 and 1997; in 1998 it was above at grades A*-G but slightly below for grades A*-C. Attainment in the sixth form is well above average at A level and in GNVQ intermediate and advanced; it has improved steadily since 1997. Work seen during the inspection was at least comparable with national standards at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, but slightly below at the standards expected for the higher GCSE and A level grades.

12. Attainment in design and technology at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is broadly similar to the national average. At Key Stage 4 it is well below in GCSE systems and control and well above in textiles. Standards in Key Stage 3 systems and control are well below expectations. Work in lessons reflects the examination results. In A level results at A and B grades have been well below average but broadly in line for grades A-E. Work in lessons suggests much higher standards in the current Years 12 and 13. Progress is good in all age groups. Standards of graphical presentation are very high.

13. In geography attainment is below the national average in Key Stage 3 teacher assessments. It has fluctuated over the years 1997 to 1999 at GCSE and A level but is, overall, in line with the national standards at these levels. Pupils' work seen during the inspection was

in line with national expectations at both key stages and in the sixth form. Progress is satisfactory during Key Stage 3 and good during Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils have a good mastery of appropriate geographical skills and know how to collect and present data.

14. In national terms and public examinations, attainment in history is below average. This is shown by the results of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, GCSE results at Key Stage 4 and A level results in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, pupils use descriptions as comprehensive exercises rather than as the tools of historians. At Key Stage 4 many pupils simply copy information sheets. Some have a good grasp of information, for example about castles. In the sixth form, students can discuss the idea of propaganda and many develop good analytical skills. They acquire vast amounts of information. The work seen in class at all key stages is better than external examinations would suggest; this is because of the new approach to the subject by the recently appointed head of department.

15. Attainment for information and communications technology at Key Stage 3 is broadly similar to that seen nationally with strengths in word processing and data processing. The weaknesses are modelling, measuring and control, although the new hardware and the separate provision are beginning to impact positively on these. Assessment of work done in other subjects, for example music, design and technology and science, needs to be more rigorous so that the true picture of actual information and communication technology standards can be gauged. The picture is similar at Key Stage 4, only weaker because of the lack of a foundation. Pupils do not receive their full entitlement at this level. Attainment in the sixth form is good and very good in business studies, psychology and design and technology. Much of pupils' and students' work is the product of home computers.

16. Attainment at GCSE level in French since the last inspection has been slightly above the national average, but in German it has been below. At A level results have been in line with national averages in both languages. Pupils' work seen in the inspection was broadly in line with national expectations in both languages. Progress is satisfactory at both key stages and good in the sixth form. A number of pupils speak French and German confidently.

17. Attainment in music at Key Stage 3 is well below national expectations for the majority of the pupils. There are, however, some notable exceptions including some pupils with special educational needs who excel in music. GCSE results have only once exceeded national averages since 1995. There has been one candidate for A level music, who gained a grade B pass. Pupils' attainment in tasks set in class is often satisfactory, but much lower than is normal since most pupils' attainment on entry to the school is extremely low.

18. Attainment in physical education in GCSE examinations was above national averages in 1999 and over the three-year period, 1997 to 1999. Pupils' work seen during the inspection was in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and above in the sixth form. Achievements are good at all levels and several talented pupils have attained highly in specific activities. For example, a Year 9 girl has had an England rugby trial and several pupils perform at regional and national levels in hockey, football, swimming, judo, athletics and netball.

19. Attainment in religious education at both key stages and in the short course is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The full GCSE course results for 1999 were well above the national average and the trend over three years has been one of improvement. The limited provision in the sixth form ensures students think about and discuss spiritual matters. Progress is good at all levels, including that of pupils who have special educational needs.

20. A small but significant number of pupils, mainly boys, underachieve and continually require additional support. Not only do they achieve below their potential, they restrict the progress of other pupils. Fortunately, most pupils make a considerable effort to achieve despite any disruption caused by disaffected pupils.

21. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards their own targets. In order to help them retain their learning, teachers go over spellings frequently, and also make sure that pupils understand the text of what they are studying. They help widely with reading skills, ensuring that pupils make their own efforts rather than reading for them. Where special needs teachers also teach classroom subjects, the standard of work of pupils with special educational needs is noticeably better, as in modern languages and science. In Years 10, 11 and 12 pupils have the opportunity to work at a special project for national accreditation. This offers them chances to study and write about topics such as community, international affairs and their own interests.

22. A pupil who had English as an additional language is competent now and no longer needs support. Two other pupils are making satisfactory progress even though they have no formal support.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

23. The majority of pupils have good attitudes to school. Pupils are keen to learn and demonstrate a willingness to concentrate on their work, especially in practical tasks, for long periods. At both key stages there are a small number of pupils, often but not exclusively boys, who have poor attitudes to school. In mixed-ability teaching groups, especially in Year 7, continuity of learning for the whole class is affected, to the dismay of most pupils. In other classes at both key stages, an undercurrent of "anti-authority" attitudes is apparent, which is not always controlled soon enough and spreads to other pupils. Overall, pupils' attitudes to school are satisfactory.

24. Attitudes in the sixth form are very good. Sixth form students are often highly motivated to succeed, concentrate well on their work and make positive contributions to school life.

25. Take-up of extra-curricular activities is low for a school of this size. Pupils are keen to represent the school in sports matches, but the majority of pupils from Year 8 upwards do not attend after-school clubs regularly.

26. Behaviour in the school is satisfactory. Movement around the school, even in the crowded corridors, is orderly and lunch-times function as civilised occasions. Pupils with poor attitudes often demonstrate poor behaviour in lessons. Restlessness disrupts some learning in most subjects at both key stages. Many of these pupils, who are mainly lower-attaining boys, have been identified as pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties. In some lessons both boys and girls continue to chatter for much of the lesson.

27. Exclusions for a fixed period are average in number for secondary schools and are made after other strategies to improve behaviour have failed. The school has been required to retain pupils who are extremely troublesome and this has exacerbated behaviour problems, especially in Year 7.

28. There is an absence of overt oppressive behaviour in the school. Bullying, racism and sexism are not tolerated and when such problems arise they are dealt with swiftly.

29. Personal development is good, especially in the sixth form. The number of sixth-formers prepared to train as anti-bullying counsellors is impressive. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of the impact of their actions on others. They show a satisfactory respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs, although many do not listen well to one another's contributions in class discussions. They are capable of taking personal responsibility. For example, the pupils representing their year groups on the school council take their responsibilities very seriously. They recognise that the school values their suggestions and opinions and that they have had an impact on several areas of school life.

30. Relationships in the school are good, especially between pupils and teachers and support staff.

31. Attendance is unsatisfactory. The overall rate for the school is just below the national average for secondary schools. Only a minority of pupils have poor attendance. Most pupils maintain good attendance records. However, the rate of unauthorised absence is over twice the national rate. Some unauthorised absence is the result of parents taking their children on holiday during term time. A small number of pupils in most year groups, but especially at Key Stage 4, have poor attendance records, and are absent without a justified written explanation. For these pupils, who are often the same individuals with poor attitudes and behaviour, learning is adversely affected.

32. The school reports that the number of pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties in the school, or who are otherwise disaffected with school life, has increased since the last inspection. This is having an adverse effect on the learning environment and attitudes of other pupils.

33. When working in the special needs rooms, pupils are well behaved, and willing to work. They enjoy the good relationships set up by staff and co-operate well. More widely, some pupils receive extra help concerning their behaviour, whether they have special needs or not. The specialist teacher concerned also counsels some pupils and prepares targets for them to follow towards better attitudes and behaviour.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

34. Overall, the teaching is good. It was very good or excellent in 30 per cent of the lessons seen, good in a further 46 per cent, satisfactory in 21 per cent and unsatisfactory in three per cent. Teaching was best in the sixth form where all subjects are taught well, but particularly in geography, design and technology, modern foreign languages, science and art. At Key Stage 3 teaching is best in design and technology and mathematics and least effective in history. At Key Stage 4 it is best in science and modern foreign languages and least effective in information and communications technology.

35. Teachers have a secure command of their subject and are enthusiastic about their work. They have the expertise and commitment to raise pupils' interest and motivation. This was especially noticeable in science at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where there is increased pupil involvement in activities, for example in the duck loan scheme, when pupils take home a duck for the weekend, "The Shocking Show" during science week and the pet show which also involves the local community. In business studies, teachers are able to draw effectively on their previous business and commercial experience. Pupils' knowledge of their own progress contributes to their attainment and this is a result of teachers' good practice in helping pupils to be aware of what they know, understand and can do.

36. In the sixth form, teachers are extremely competent in the way they teach A levels. They are able to motivate students to reach the necessary standards. GNVQ courses are well taught and give students, who are not naturally academic, opportunities to reach their potential on a more vocational route.

37. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are given attention, but in information and communications technology, these skills are somewhat neglected at Key Stage 4, when pupils do not receive their curricular entitlement. Practice in developing pupils' skills in numeracy is good in mathematics. Pupils consolidate basic numerical concepts as a result of being given a short test at the beginning of each lesson.

38. Teachers' expectations are generally high and pupils respond well. In design and technology, for example, the quality of graphical presentation of work on display is high and effectively contributes to raising standards. Throughout the school there are examples of fine art and design work that pupils have produced or created. These are respected by other pupils and set a high standard. Pupils benefit greatly from seeing what can be produced with effort.

39. Pupils are generally managed well in lessons. Teachers have very good relationships with them and on most occasions the ambience in the classroom is good. When it is not, it is usually because of the influence of some very difficult pupils who disrupt the otherwise productive and high interest level of working. English teachers, for example, revealed enthusiasm and patience. Some well-structured lessons challenged and motivated pupils most effectively, such as pairs preparing and addressing script writing following a reading of the play *Whale*.

40. Teachers use time effectively. They use a range of very good exemplar materials that guide and support pupils' work, particularly in design, effectively. In modern foreign languages teachers use resources well, especially overhead projectors, to give pupils a variety of experiences.

41. Pupils' learning is good overall. Good planning and effective management of lessons ensure effective learning, as in a Year 10 class studying the climatic variations in the British Isles, and in information and communications technology when teachers provide challenging and interesting tasks that are well matched to pupils' ability. They provide high levels of individual support and guidance working with pupils at their computers. Gifted linguists, musicians, artists and sportsmen/women are given support and encouragement to achieve their potential. In physical education, there was very good use of questioning by a teacher who probed and challenged the pupils' understanding of running techniques. The teacher ensured appropriate learning for all levels of attainment by dividing the pupils into groups on different courts and setting appropriate tasks for each group.

42. On occasions pupils' learning is unsatisfactory. A few pupils influence others and, as in a Year 11 geography lesson, a lack of interest percolated the room and they lapsed into their own conversations. In Year 7 art, a minority of boys, with one clear leader, considered it unfashionable to learn and were wilfully disobedient. In music, some boys chose to use unacceptable language. Such pupils need more support to ensure the effect of their negative attitudes is minimised.

43. There are very few pupils who need extra support for English as an additional language. One pupil who received help has done very well and is doing well on GCSE courses. Currently, no others receive specific support as there is none available for the pupils, for example, who speak Afrikaans. However, they are given general support and are fully integrated into the school and make at least satisfactory progress.

44. Teaching in withdrawal lessons for pupils who have special educational needs is generally good, ranging from good to excellent. Teachers use appropriate techniques and methods, ensuring that pupils understand what they are learning. They have established good relationships with pupils, gaining their confidence and encouraging a good working atmosphere in the special needs base.

45. Pupils who have special educational needs learn satisfactorily across the range of subjects. In withdrawal lessons, where they have more specialised teaching, they learn well. Most subject departments produce their own targets that address pupils' learning needs satisfactorily. These needs are initially identified by the special needs department, and then communicated to all teachers.

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

46. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are satisfactory. The sixth form provides good quality and range of learning opportunities for all students. The school has a sensible curriculum policy that has been agreed by the governors. This area is constantly reviewed in order to 'challenge pupils to achieve their best.' As a result, there has been a very thorough curriculum review involving all sections of the school community and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis has been carried out. This will result in some changes for September 2000 to include: some increase in option choices and the introduction of GNVQ at Key Stage 4.

47. Since the last inspection the school has ensured that all pupils take religious education, either by a short course or a full GCSE, through to the end of Key Stage 4. There have also been improvements in the arrangements for religious education in the sixth form. The imbalance in physical education between games and other activities has been rectified. However, the provision for teaching information and communications technology at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 3 the teaching of ICT is not strong in all subject departments and opportunities are missed to increase the motivation and improve the learning of all pupils in information and communications technology.

48. The curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is generally broad and balanced. This school year, in addition to the National Curriculum subjects and religious education, a second modern foreign language is offered, starting in Year 9. The teaching of Spanish as a twilight course is an unsatisfactory arrangement. The arrangement for teaching a mathematics lesson as part of the science time is undesirable, resulting in pupils having a different teacher for that lesson. The option pattern in Years 10 and 11 is good, enabling pupils to keep open a wide range of courses. The use of the Youth Award Scheme is also good. The time allocated to different subjects is satisfactory, but the timetable arrangements resulting in some double lessons are more appropriate in practical work and not helpful to some subjects, such as history. In the sixth form, the breadth and balance of the curriculum are good with a wide range of A level courses and GNVQ work. In addition there is a Preparation and Progression course, key skills courses, GCSE intermediate mathematics, and GCSE English resits. The general studies course is compulsory and can be accredited at the end of Year 12.

49. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. At Key Stages 3 and 4 there are insufficient support assistants to ensure that these pupils receive adequate and consistent help, particularly in relation to those with behavioural difficulties.

50. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is inconsistent, but good in places. There are strong areas such as history and particularly science, which uses innovative and unusual methods to stimulate writing. A literacy co-ordinator has been appointed and "Progress" groups have been formed recently at Key Stage 3 to promote achievement in literacy. The library has prepared to support expected developments in this area.

51. Skills in numeracy are addressed predominately in mathematics lessons. Mathematics teachers give pupils brisk tests at the beginning of lessons to sharpen up their understanding of basic number bonds. There is no school policy for numeracy and, as yet, practice does not occur extensively beyond mathematics.

52. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities. Several departments, including science, geography and modern foreign languages, run residential courses. In particular, pupils have opportunities to study languages in France and Germany, go to language films, lectures and other events and can participate in the school's Languages Show every two years. In physical education, the provision for after-school activities is good and promotes health and exercise for all. The boys have many teams in football, rugby, cricket and athletics and enter leagues, cups and tournaments. The girls have netball and football teams and the dancers have performed in the South Gloucestershire display. The introduction of an earlier finishing time on Wednesday afternoon increased the higher participation in after-school activities. Twenty-nine pupils will be taking part in charity work in Zanzibar in August 2001. They will be helping to teach English, and will be involved in construction work on a new school. They will also help make improvements to a football pitch for children.

53. The school pays proper attention to equal opportunities. Generally, the curriculum is available to all. The inadequacies in the provision for information and communications technology at Key Stage 4, and some adverse effects that occur because of long assemblies and continuity in subjects that are part of circus arrangements, require attention. There is good practice in science, where single-sex groups are employed to aid attainment. In English there is effective use of selected literature which promotes sensitivity to different groups, for example, gender, ethnic and disability.

54. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. The programme is well planned, with an interesting and useful range of activities for all pupils. There is a helpful sex education policy statement and this is taught by the science and PSHE departments. The policy has been devised with the help of a national expert who was also a governor. Each year has its own training day, when the timetable is abandoned and special activities are arranged to cover specified topics such as drugs misuse, friendships, "presenting yourself" and action planning.

55. The programme for teaching careers and vocational education is very good and this work is a strength of the school. The school was one of the first in the area to be awarded the Investors in Careers award. Following the belief that 'all teachers are teachers of careers' the work is thoroughly integrated. Each curriculum area organises a 'Working Lifestyles' Conference for Year 10 pupils. This is imaginative and highly successful. All Year 10 pupils participate in a work experience week and academic tutors are actively involved in supporting their pupils through advising, monitoring and de-briefing. Staff also participate in a bi-annual visit to local companies.

56. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good and this is largely, but not exclusively, through the wide-ranging contacts developed by the careers department. In 2000, the work has included the police, Environmental Agency, Amnesty International, RAC,

Bristol 200 Harbour-side Project, Bristol Weather Centre, Rolls Royce, Marks and Spencer and the Royal Marines.

57. Relationships with partner institutions are satisfactory. There are developing links with local primary schools but this is an area that has not been explored fully. The sixth form has good links with higher education institutions, especially with the University of the West of England.

58. The school continues to provide well for the moral and cultural development of its pupils, and its provision for social development is now very good. Spiritual aspects promoted in school life are now good.

59. Although departments are not required to identify and consider these opportunities in their curriculum plans, schemes of work or individual lessons, the general provision within and across subject areas is satisfactory. Some subjects, particularly science and religious education, provide these opportunities well. Others, especially history, music and geography, miss potential opportunities, especially for reflection on the spiritual aspects of pupils' work, which could usefully enhance their experience of these subjects. At school level, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well planned. The spiritual dimension, for example, is now covered in a number of formal alternative starts to the school day. The daily act of collective worship is open to all pupils to attend, although all but some of the youngest pupils' parents choose that their children should not take part in this activity. These acts of worship conform to statutory requirements. Pupils choosing not to attend have a "Thought for the Day" in their tutor groups, to which most pupils respond appropriately and reflectively. Pupils may now choose not to miss the act of collective worship in order to attend their weekly year assemblies, but most choose to join their peers in these sessions. All these opportunities are well planned at school level. Outside speakers and drama presentations often enliven assemblies, offering a mix of spiritual, moral, social and cultural ideas for reflection. The provision of a half-GCSE course in religious education, for all pupils at Key Stage 4 not doing the full course, now ensures that these concepts are fully considered in pupils' formal curriculum. Overall, the school's provision for spiritual development is now good.

60. Moral education is also good. The well publicised code of conduct is well known to all pupils. Respect for differences is encouraged throughout. The "friendship" policy and training put a positive slant on the problems of bullying. Many sixth formers are engaged in counselling lower-school pupils if bullying occurs. Reinforcement of the school's high moral expectations occurs within appropriate opportunities such as trips and visits.

61. School provision for pupils to develop socially is very good. The school council is an important mechanism for this, operating very well to empower pupils with democratic rights and responsibilities. Several pupils, for example, are involved in selection processes for new staff. Recent examples include their involvement in the appointment of the deputy head. Pupils are given many opportunities to welcome visitors to the school and take responsibility for showing them around at open evenings, for example. Pupils often also go outside school, to the local shopping mall, for example, on projects, interacting socially with the public. Year 11 are all interviewed formally by one of the many volunteers from local businesses. Pupils take this event seriously, and benefit from the experience.

62. The many examples of cultural activities, visits and presentations provide good opportunities for pupils' cultural development. School productions include the recent presentation of "Cuba", with drama and dance developing well in the school. Activity days are a useful opportunity for pupils to extend the cultural range of their curriculum.

63. Pupils who have special educational needs are sometimes withdrawn for more specialist teaching. They do, however, have full access to the whole curriculum, including extra-curricular activities. The school operates a policy of full integration for all pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

64. The school cares well for its pupils. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to handle matters relating to child protection and health and safety. Pupils and staff are able to work in a safe and secure environment. All pupils in the school are able to confide in at least one adult. The year group teams of tutors provide stability for all children. Heads of year and tutors know their pupils well. Peer counsellors, support staff and an appropriate use of external agencies contribute to the quality of care given. All aspects of academic performance and personal development are monitored and recorded well, and enable good educational and personal support to be given to all pupils.

65. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good but still do not manage to dissuade the unsatisfactory proportion of unauthorised absence. Registration procedures are conscientiously conducted and reasons for absence are continually sought. The introduction of first-day contact to parents of absent children is beginning to take effect with some pupils, but not all parents are providing the necessary written evidence to support an authorised absence being recorded. The educational welfare service is used appropriately, but the support offered is insufficient.

66. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. For the majority of pupils they are successful and pupils respond well to the systems of rewards and incentives. Local agencies, including the support services provided by the Local Education Authority, are fully used, but the amount of support available to the school is insufficient. Further strategies need to be developed to manage disruptive children. Procedures to eliminate bullying and other oppressive behaviour are effective, particularly the peer counselling provided by sixth formers as part of the Anti-Bullying Campaign.

67. Good support and guidance are available to all pupils. Well-established procedures enable all pupils entering the school in Year 7, together with their parents, to learn about the school's expectations of them in all aspects of school life. Advice and guidance through the carefully thought-out programmes for training days and monthly tutorials are good and pupils are well prepared for the world of work and the next stage of education. Data collected on pupils form a firm base for supporting individual pupils and reporting their achievements and progress. Academic tutoring for pupils at Key Stage 4 is effective in raising standards and the support for disaffected pupils at this stage is also good.

68. The previous inspection report indicated the need to improve the school's assessment and recording strategies and practices to map overall academic progress of individual pupils and to set specific targets to raise standards at Key Stages 3 and 4.

69. The school has addressed this task with vigour and is well on the way to creating a potentially very powerful system for monitoring attainment and progress and for delivering effective reports and analyses. The school's central database is stored electronically. It records and analyses twice yearly assessments in all subjects at both key stages. The system is still evolving; the core subjects are well established, but there is still work to be done in drama, music and physical education. Similarly, data have now been installed to include the forecasting of Key Stage 3 attainment, but the information for predicting GCSE performance from Key Stage 3 data awaits inclusion. The system is beginning to be used effectively to provide targets for individuals and cohorts. In addition, the system is now producing effective

reports, which have been welcomed by pupils and their parents. The academic mentoring system at Key Stage 4 is particularly successful. In this a teacher looks after the academic and personal development of six pupils. The pupils and their parents contribute significantly to the mentoring process. The school has made good progress in developing its central assessment database. It is too early to see the benefits for pupils in terms of increased attainment, but the school now has a very sound picture of the progress of individual pupils as they pass through the school.

70. In general, assessment data are used well for curriculum planning in most subjects. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are generally good. Those at Key Stage 4 are particularly successful.

71. The school cares well for the pupils who have special educational needs. Processes for identification and re-testing as they move through the school are good, and careful records are kept, showing individual progress. Withdrawal lessons give more specialised help and in-class support is also available.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

72. The parents view the work of the school as satisfactory. A small number attended the meeting with the registered inspector and about 10 per cent of parents returned the questionnaire. Parents expressed a strong belief that their children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. Most also say that they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. Some parents expressed some concern about the behaviour in the school, the quality of teaching, the information they receive about progress, how closely the school works with parents and the quality of extra-curricular provision. Whilst the inspection team's findings agree with parental concern about some pupils' behaviour in the school, they do not support other concerns expressed.

73. The school has developed a satisfactory partnership with parents. The school works hard to involve parents at every stage of their child's education but many parents are reluctant to become involved in the life and the work of the school.

74. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The prospectus gives all appropriate information for prospective parents and the annual report from the governors to all parents provides a full picture of the school's work. "Highlights" is a well-produced monthly newsletter giving details of events and achievements in the school, which is distributed to contributory primary schools and local businesses as well as families with children in the school. Information given to parents of Year 6 children is of a very high standard. All pupils and parents attend a family interview before pupils join the school, when the school routines and expectations are fully explained. This culminates in the signing of a home-school agreement. These procedures are well established and all pupils now at Key Stages 3 and 4 have signed an agreement.

75. Regular surveys are conducted to establish parents' views on the work of the school. The returns, by a small but interested group of parents, indicate that they find progress reports comprehensive and easy to understand. Heads of year are in regular contact with parents in all year groups.

76. Parents' contribution to children's learning at school and at home is satisfactory. Attendance at consultation evenings is satisfactory in all year groups. Some parents help the school by organising or attending fund-raising events through the Friends of Patchway. A very small number of parents help with sports coaching and occasionally attend the daily act of

collective worship. Parents support their children by attending plays and concerts and some help with transport and watch their children participate in sports activities. The use of homework planners is not always effective as a link with parents because they do not always sign them. Written explanations of absence are not always forthcoming resulting in a higher than average rate of unauthorised absence. When problems arise most parents are willing to co-operate with the school in finding a solution. Parental response does not always match the considerable efforts made by the school to effect a lasting partnership. Some parents, especially of children who have problems, seem unwilling or unable to sustain a helpful relationship with the school in solving their child's problems.

77. There are good contacts between the special needs department and the parents of pupils with special needs. They have the opportunity to attend evenings, specifically arranged for them, to discuss their children's progress. Every effort is made by the special needs co-ordinator to accommodate parents' attendance at annual reviews, so that the majority are able to be present.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

78. The governors, headteacher and key staff lead the school very well. They follow a united and clear direction, which is identified in the school development plan. This is a very comprehensive document which takes into account the school aims and values. It includes continual reference to the individual and this is exemplified in the way the school is reluctant to exclude pupils. The value of the individual is paramount in this school, which is oversubscribed. The headteacher and senior managers are good role models who care deeply for the pupils in the school. They are committed to equal opportunities that are, in the main, provided.

79. Middle managers are at least effective and many are very effective. Curriculum leaders in religious education, modern foreign languages, mathematics and special educational needs are particularly good. Heads of year vary in their skills but are overall good and perform their duties conscientiously. The learning support department is well led, with a cohesive team of teachers and support staff. Good records are kept, annual reviews are recorded carefully, and statutory requirements are met. The special needs team meets weekly to discuss pupils' progress or difficulties.

80. The governors are effective and fulfil almost all their statutory duties efficiently. They are very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They give up a great deal of time to try to minimise behavioural problems that have occurred particularly in Years 7 and 11 and have felt, to some extent, unsupported by outside agencies. The governors are involved in the creation of the school development plan and approve its contents before publication. They also have links with curriculum areas and specific year groups. They are active in the life of the school and contribute considerable expertise and empathy as and when required.

81. The school's priorities are clear. Senior managers have designed a new curriculum model and hope to implement this in September 2000. Literacy has been highlighted and some good initiatives are being embedded within the curriculum. The school intends to provide comprehensively for information and communications technology at Key Stage 4 and plans are in place for this to occur. Raising the numbers of students in the sixth form has been a focus and the school has had some success in this context. The improvement of pupils' attitudes to academic work is an important target, which it is hoped will improve and remove some of problems with pupils encountered in Years 7 and 11. The school's target of 34 per cent for five or more grades A*-C is lower than in 1999 when it was 40 per cent. Although pupils gained 43 per cent in 1999, the target for 2000 is not unrealistic as this group (Year 11) has had a lower performance than other years throughout the school and on entry. Cognitive ability test scores

and reading test scores have been used to estimate potential results at GCSE. This has given considerable credence to the statement that, as a whole, the 2000 Year 11 has less potential than many other year groups.

82. All staff share a commitment to improve. The number of new initiatives and the detailed school development plan are just two examples of this. There is awareness at all levels that some pupils are proving particularly difficult and managers are very concerned about this. They aim to overcome this problem, but need considerable support if the objective is to be achieved.

83. Financial control is very good. All expenditure is carefully planned and major initiatives approved by the governors. There is a sense of order throughout the school; the ambience is good and reflects prudence and careful resource management. New technology is used effectively. The school is excellent at monitoring and evaluating its own performance. It has commissioned reviews by the Local Education Authority and other external agencies; it has surveyed the opinions of pupils and parents. It has addressed items in the auditors' report and analysed departmental performance. It takes good note of advice given and issues raised and acts on these very effectively. The school provides good value for money.

84. Many practices are involved in the school's successful attempt to seek "best value". Major items of expenditure require three competitive quotes. Five caretakers are employed to help with maintenance. The school uses a policy of advanced funding to gain discounts, for example, buying carpets in bulk. Purchasing is preferred to leasing and Local Education Authority facilities, where possible, preferred to private services. The school uses in-house training wherever possible.

85. The sixth form is only just cost-effective but contributes well to the school's ethos and standing. Some classes are too small. There is a good range of courses from which students of all abilities can choose.

86. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, but there are a few weak areas. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach and there is a good mixture of new and experienced teaching staff, although there were a large number of newly qualified teachers in 1999. Turnover has been high, at 34 per cent for the two years 1998 and 1999, but the majority of resignations were due to career advancement. Since the last inspection there has been a reduction in the gender imbalance at all levels except for heads of department. Physical education, history and modern languages have all suffered long-term absences, which have affected the continuity of teaching and learning. A temporary appointment as head of English has affected development positively in the department. There are insufficient specialist teachers in religious education and in information and communications technology, and insufficient technicians in the information and communications technology department. There is no technical support in food technology. The number of support assistants in the special needs department is low for the size of the school and the number of pupils on the register of special educational needs. The numbers of administrative and premises staff are sufficient to meet the needs of the school. The premises staff play an important role in site maintenance; they affect standards by providing a clean and comfortable working environment.

87. The school's strategy for appraisal and performance management is good. The first round of formal appraisal has been completed and there is now regular monitoring of teaching and performance by line managers, which is formally recorded. There is a staff development plan linked closely to the needs of the school development plan. All in-service training needs, for both teaching and support staff, are related to these plans.

88. The induction of new staff and the school's potential for training new teachers are very good. There is a comprehensive induction programme for both teaching and support staff, and a specially extended induction package for newly qualified teachers. The school has not taken part in the training of student teachers for the past two years. However, the standards of teaching and leadership, the professional development systems and the commitment to improvement are such that the school has the potential to be an effective place for student teachers to train.

89. The positive standards of deployment, induction and development commented on in the last report have been maintained and the standards of monitoring have been improved. The school has recently been re-awarded Investors in People status.

90. Resources are good overall and generally much improved since the last inspection. The improvements are particularly obvious in English, design and technology (except for computer-aided design and manufacture which is under-developed), geography, music, religious education, in provision for pupils with special educational needs and in the library where the stock is fully computerised. This makes it possible to monitor easily the use made of the increasing numbers of books, videos, CD ROMs and other materials. Provision for information and communications technology is good in mathematics, science and music, where control technology is a strength, but is lacking in modern foreign languages, where more software is needed, and particularly in art where provision is poor. Provision is well-supported by careful budgeting, which allocates adequate allowances to each department.

91. The accommodation is good. It enables the curriculum to be taught effectively in all subjects. Rooms are designated for specific subject use and are mostly grouped together. Specialist accommodation in design and technology, science and art meets the demands of the curriculum. The newly designated English block, with its integral resource area, is an excellent facility. The physical education accommodation is very good. It includes a gymnasium, sports hall with squash courts and extensive fields. The library and sixth form study facilities are regularly used. Both are spacious and well organised, with facilities for information and communications technology. The accommodation for special educational needs is appropriately divided to give several small areas each with a welcoming sense of purpose.

92. The school provides a pleasant environment for learning. There is a stimulating "animal room", a conservation area and a pond. A continuous programme of decoration and maintenance is undertaken by the five school caretakers so that the school looks very clean, attractive and well maintained. These high standards are a strength of the accommodation. The reception area is spacious and welcoming and the quality of display in all public areas of the school is very good. The art department has made their corridor interesting, with an "art station" theme. At changeover of lessons some bottlenecks do occur in the older narrow corridors and at the intersection of the main corridors. Display in most subject areas is good and very good in English. Several ramps give wheelchair access to the ground floor but access to upper floors is not possible for wheelchairs. Efficient procedures are in place for fire, health and safety matters. Security fencing surrounds the school. The accommodation has improved since the last inspection with the addition of the new English block and the redesigned library and sixth form areas. Overall, the spacious and well-maintained accommodation makes a very positive contribution to the ethos and teaching atmosphere of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

93. To further improve the quality of education, the school should:

- (1) Improve the response of the small number of difficult pupils by:

- improving the strategies for managing disaffected pupils who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties;
(see paragraphs 23, 27, 49, 66, 73, 166)
 - improving the poor attitudes of a small but significant minority of pupils, mainly boys;
(see paragraphs 23, 66, 115, 129, 142, 160, 165)
 - improving the attainment and achievements of these pupils;
(see paragraphs 20, 23, 26, 42, 76)
 - lowering the level of unauthorised absence.
(See paragraph 65)
- (2) Build on the improved provision for information and communications technology by:
- ensuring that pupils have equal access to their full entitlement at Key Stage 4;
(see paragraphs 47, 153, 156)
 - ensuring that their attainment and progress are assessed effectively in accordance with statutory requirements.
(See paragraphs 15, 156)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	204
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	79

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	28	46	21	3	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

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	Number of pupils on the school's roll	1111
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	106	4

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	259	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	37

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	106	117	223

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	55	31
	Girls	55	72	68
	Total	120	127	99
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (65)	58 (60)	45 (56)
	National	63 (64)	62 (69)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (35)	28 (36)	15 (27)
	National	28 (34)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	66	57	27
	Girls	67	72	73
	Total	133	129	100
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (61)	59 (64)	53 (61)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (30)	34 (37)	21 (30)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	122	99	221

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	40	108	119
	Girls	55	88	99
	Total	95	196	218
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43.8 (37)	89 (90)	95 (96)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38.2
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	21	20	41

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	11.8	10.3	11.0 (11.17)	2.0	7.5	4.2 (2.25)
National	17.9	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	27
	National	72.9

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	6
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	1211
Any other minority ethnic group	8

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	65	5
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	77.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.03

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	360

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.4
Key Stage 4	24.0

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2,950,942
Total expenditure	2,916,044
Expenditure per pupil	2,360
Balance brought forward from previous year	302,373
Balance carried forward to next year	201,173

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1239
Number of questionnaires returned	125

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	50	10	5	0
My child is making good progress in school.	33	58	6	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	14	55	16	8	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	49	21	5	1
The teaching is good.	25	59	8	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	50	15	7	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	34	10	4	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	40	4	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	22	48	20	6	4
The school is well led and managed.	33	48	8	6	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	58	10	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	39	19	7	17

Other issues raised by parents

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

ENGLISH

94. English attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average having declined since 1997. Pupils enter the school with levels below the national average. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment at Key Stage 3. Girls are ahead of boys at the end of Key Stage 4. This is similar to the national picture. English GCSE results in the A*-C range are slightly below the national average and have fluctuated annually since 1997. They are in line with national figures in the A*-G range. Literature results are above the national average at A*-C and have improved since 1997. English results at GCSE compare favourably with other core subjects in the school. A level results have improved slightly since 1997. Drama results are below the national average for A*-C grades but are in line with national figures for A*-G grades,

95. Written work in Year 7 reveals a variety of tasks: poetry, script, letters and response to literature. Presentation is good and there are some spectacular individual efforts such as one Year 7 girl producing a splendid anthology of her own poetry inspired by that of Enid Blyton. Pupils in Year 7 write little extended prose. Also, there is little evidence of the teaching or reinforcement of the basic skills of punctuation, sentence construction and paragraphing. However, there is evidence of spelling and dictionary work. Longer written pieces are attempted in Years 8 and 9 despite the wide range of attainment. For example the draft books of one Year 8 class contained detailed and challenging essays based on a study of *The Machine Gunners*. Pupils write in an increasing variety of styles including script, imaginative work and formal letter writing. Standards remain below the national average through Year 8, but progress in some individual lessons observed was satisfactory or better. An accurate judgement from observation of Year 9 is impossible as the year group was engaged in examinations. Nevertheless the recent end of Key Stage 3 results suggest no dramatic acceleration during Year 9.

96. There is sophisticated coursework on set texts in GCSE folders but also some unexpected inconsistency, such as one pupil's folder containing an A grade essay on a difficult text, *Man For All Seasons*, and D essays on simpler topics. Occasionally technical accuracy is still flawed at Key Stage 4 with weak paragraphing and poor spelling such as "threater" and "seperate. " Redrafted and word processed work is abundant at all key stages, although there are no specific schemes for information and communication technology in the department. Written progress through the key stages is satisfactory. A level achievement appears to accelerate rapidly in Year 13. There is a lack of confidence in Year 12 and technical errors still persist -"Something is rotten in the State of Denmark." Year 13 students produce sustained, well argued prose showing deep understanding. Their capacity for independent study is apparent.

97. Pupils study good quality "readers" during all key stages, such as *Goodnight Mister Tom* and *Of Mice and Men*. They are willing readers in class and often fluent. Reading is not a habit, however, and book borrowing tails off after Years 7 and 8. Little concentrated silent reading was witnessed though some pupils were seen to be equipped with their own "private" reader.

98. Speaking and listening skills vary depending on class management. In good lessons observed pupils' oral response is prompt and competent, both in answering questions and talking to the class. For example one Year 7 class were happy to read out their own successful attempts at cockney rhyming slang. Many pupils listen perceptively and they are quick-witted.

These qualities are seen at their best when teacher expectations are high, as in a Year 7 class discussing and later reading the script of *Demon Headmaster*. Vocabulary is more impressive in oral work than in written work and progress is often good. Sixth form speaking and listening performance is boosted considerably by the skill and direction of the teachers observed. It is below national expectations in Year 12 but in line with or above national expectations in Year 13.

99. Literacy across the curriculum is inconsistent but good in places. There are strong areas such as history and particularly science. Here innovative and unusual methods are used to stimulate writing. A literacy co-ordinator has been appointed and teaching ("Progress") groups have been formed recently at Key Stage 3 to promote achievement in literacy. The library is primed to support expected developments in this area.

100. The majority of pupils are co-operative and ready to learn. Some exceptions were noted, particularly in Year 7 where defiance and reluctance to settle taxed teachers' skills and patience. A few pupils in Year 11, on the eve of study leave, had "switched off." The pupils flourish in a tight structure and with firm direction, but become too relaxed when these are absent. Little serious misbehaviour was witnessed in English lessons. Relationships with staff are invariably good because the teachers are encouraging and positive. Some contrasts were observed. Focused, individual study was observed in a few classes. Pupils are familiar with working in groups and pairs. Standards of learning are generally satisfactory but a significant minority of pupils are insufficiently challenged at Key Stages 3 and 4.

101. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good. They have developed well organised units in self contained schemes of work. These are very good. They should be refined to improve continuity and consistency through the year groups. Out of twenty lessons, all but four were at least good or very good and only two were unsatisfactory (No Year 9 lessons could be observed because the inspection coincided with examination week. Also it should be noted that some Year 11 classes were depleted in their last English lesson before GCSE study leave). The marking of work is positive accurate and regular. Teachers, in lessons, work very hard indeed; they prepare their material well and are quick to praise their pupils. This promotes the good relationships mentioned earlier and, when combined with high expectations, also promotes good progress. The best lessons include recapitulation, carefully timed tasks, a summary and clearly explained homework. A small minority of lessons are insufficiently brisk and this often coincides with inappropriately used group work.

102. Pupils with special educational needs are mainly withdrawn from class for learning support. In-class support is provided but none was witnessed. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of 'Progress' groups. Individual education plans are in place in the department and all teachers are familiar with them. The departments of English and special educational needs liaise on a regular basis. Provision, in this respect, is at least satisfactory.

103. Leadership of the department is very good. The acting head of department has done as much as anyone could reasonably expect to improve the department bearing in mind the temporary nature of his post. There are weekly departmental meetings. The minutes indicate practical concern with good classroom practice and continuous assessment of departmental efficiency. Relationships within the department are warm and mutually supportive. Teachers are well qualified, deployed effectively and have a wide range of experience.

104. A specialist drama teacher has been appointed since the last inspection and is creating a dramatic tradition, ably supported by a second English/drama specialist. All drama lessons observed were either good or very good. Staff and pupils are very enthusiastic. The drama area is small but well furnished. An inspiring atmosphere prevails. Years 11, 12 and 13 were

observed working as a single class in well-controlled conditions where pupils produced good quality dramatic sketches. Progress and standards in lessons observed were higher than national expectations. Performances are creative and confident but sometimes lack sophistication.

105. Both English and drama departments are dynamic and forward-looking. The overlap of interests promises to enrich the school's provision. There has been improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

106. At Key Stage 3 in the national tests in 1999, pupils attained below the national average for the standard level and for the next higher level. These results were lower than those for schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. The results were similar to those for the previous year and lower than in 1997; there was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The results are better than those for the other core subjects.

107. At GCSE in the same year, pupils attained just below the national average for grades A*-C. This was a significant improvement on the previous year's results, which were below the national average as they were in 1997 too. There was little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. At A level in a small group, five out of six students in 1999 obtained a pass grade. The small group size makes comparison with national figures inappropriate but the aggregated figures for 1997 to 1999 for A-E grades are higher than the national figure.

108. Given an intake which is below the national average, the results since 1997 show that pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

109. From lesson observations and inspection of pupils' work at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form it is clear that, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils attain below the national average, by the end of Key Stage 4, they attain near to the national average and in the sixth form in Year 13, they attain above the average for A level mathematics.

110. Standards of numeracy are unsatisfactory for a large proportion of pupils joining the school in Year 7. They do not have a good grasp of tables and number bonds. The department is sensibly addressing this problem by having a general lesson structure that follows the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy with an emphasis on mental work to start and often end lessons. Pupils appear to enjoy the challenge of the games employed in these lessons. Pupils' standards of spatial awareness, shape and handling raw data are generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Particularly good displays were seen in the work of Year 9 presenting the results of their survey. Similarly, good examples of Year 8 "curve stitching" were seen on two classroom walls. Pupils enjoy investigative work, as seen in a successful Year 11 investigation into isoperimetric shapes which established that size did not matter in this particular investigation. Information and communications technology was used successfully in a middle-attaining Year 7 group to develop estimation skills and in several using and applying mathematics investigations. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics are used and developed in several other subjects. For example, pupils use measurement skills in design and technology, graph plotting in science and geography and general data presentation skills very effectively in the sixth form.

111. The department encourages the sensible use of calculators in lessons. Pupils generally take pride in their work. Pupils with special educational needs generally attain appropriately,

though poor attainment was evident in the work of a small number of pupils with behavioural difficulties.

112. Sixth form classes attain well. Year 13 students solve complex problems confidently involving the use of Maclaurin's Theorem. Students develop good powers of analysis in class.

113. At both key stages and in the sixth form pupils generally make good progress. Pupils and students make particularly good progress and learn well because teaching is stimulating. Pupils' standards of numeracy on entry to the school inhibit their progress. Pupils generally enjoy learning and using mathematics in practical situations. They enjoy using information and communications technology as was seen in occasional short visits to the mathematics computer room. Pupils with special educational needs usually make good progress but in one lesson two pupils with behavioural difficulties were seen to make very little progress. Pupils enjoy working in groups. This was seen in a very successful middle-attaining Year 7 class, which developed very accurate estimation skills as a result of their collaborative discussions. Similarly, Year 13 students consolidated their understanding of the use of number sequences effectively when fellow students led the session with occasional helpful interjection from the teacher.

114. Teaching at both key stages and in the sixth form is generally good and in nearly one half of lessons is very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection. The general structure of lessons is based on the National Numeracy Strategy and usually involves a warm-up session on mental mathematics and ends with a plenary session. This structure is successful and pupils appear to enjoy the regular, semi-competitive mental tests. Lessons are well paced to maintain interest. Teachers know their subject well and regularly anticipate problem areas in learning. Teaching methods are generally "traditional" and successful, with the whiteboard the main tool in lessons. The inadequate use of colour in lessons prevents some good lessons from being very good. Use of references to the outside world stimulates interest. This was seen in a Year 7 class looking forward to estimating heights in the school grounds in their next lesson. Teachers use information and communications technology regularly, though its use was seen in one lesson only during the inspection. Relationships are generally very good and the atmosphere in the classroom is harmonious. Teachers usually have apparently effortless control, though the presence of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in one lesson led to pupils being removed from the class. Homework is used effectively to complement classroom learning. Much marking of written work includes helpful diagnostic comment by the teacher. Pupils do not take textbooks home, but the department makes effective use of school-produced homework books, which contain ample challenging work for pupils. Assessment procedures are well structured and teachers use assessment routinely to plan further learning.

115. Pupils generally enjoy mathematics lessons. They appreciate the new format of lessons, where they have a short sharp mental arithmetic warm-up session to start the lesson and often finish the lesson with a similar competitive routine. In the vast majority of lessons pupils are well behaved and well motivated. They enjoy answering and working in groups as in a very positive lesson with Year 7 class estimating the length of rods successfully in teams of four. They enjoy practical work and using information and communications technology in lessons. Usually they keep their attention going throughout the lesson. The occasional poor behaviour seen in lessons was associated with pupils with behavioural difficulties and with two Year 11 pupils who were leaving school the next day.

116. The department is well managed by a very experienced, caring professional who leads by example and has very good systems in place to monitor teaching.. A very dedicated team appreciates his leadership. They give very freely of their time to help maximise the attainment of pupils.

117. The department has made good progress in several areas since the last inspection. It has improved its resources and schemes of work, introduced a lesson format in line with the National Numeracy Strategy and improved the standards of teaching. The last report referred to the lack of special educational needs support in the classroom. This area remains a problem for the department in some of its lowest sets at both key stages. Overall, the department provides good value for money.

SCIENCE

118. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in science. In 1999, pupils' attainment in national tests at the age of 14 was below the national average for all schools. Boys did better than girls. These results were broadly similar to those for mathematics and English.

119. Most pupils are entered for the double award examination at GCSE. The 1999 passes in the A*-G range continued the pattern of the previous three years and were slightly above national averages. A*-C passes were, however, below national figures. These results are broadly in line with those for similar schools. The introduction of single-sex teaching groups for Years 9, 10 and 11 in science has resulted in an improvement of almost 19 per cent in girls' A*-C grades since 1997. Results for boys, however, have remained fairly constant. Total passes in the A*-C range have improved since 1997, but do not show a consistent trend. A level results for 1999 were good, with all candidates for physics and biology gaining grades in the A-E range and over half the chemistry candidates matching this. Three A level candidates gained top grades in the A/B range. Comparisons with national figures are not valid because of the small sizes of the teaching groups.

120. Attainment in lessons invariably meets the teacher's expectations, and is in line with national expectations. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs usually attain appropriate standards in both practical and oral work. When they are supported in class by extra adult help, their written work enables them to have a complete written record of what they have done. Without this support, written work and the results of their experiments are often not completed.

121. Progress during lessons is usually at least satisfactory, and sometimes good. Progress only falters when poor behaviour intervenes. Usually this is by a single pupil who lacks self-control, but while the teacher is dealing with such a pupil, there is a temptation for others to stop working and to chat. In classes of lower-attaining pupils, progress frequently consists of revisiting the work of the previous lesson before moving on to new knowledge. This is a vital part of lessons because many pupils have poorly developed listening skills and although they may write down what has just been explained, when they are questioned later, they frequently cannot remember much of the information. Allied to this is a reluctance to learn what has gone before, so that the content of the previous lesson is rarely remembered correctly. This is also considered to be a major reason why classroom performance is not matched by results in national examinations, despite all the encouragement and revision help given to pupils well before examination time.

122. A level students make the difficult jump from GCSE courses to A level work successfully and the standard of their work is above expectations for the course. Confidence, maturity and extremely good relationships are quite clear. Sixth formers also benefit greatly from the tutorial nature of lessons, made possible by small group sizes. More work is done than would be possible in larger, more formal classes, and it is often in greater detail and at a faster pace. Individual needs can also be met more easily by the tutor and individual challenges presented

to high-attaining pupils. Their oral participation in answering questions, giving short presentations and leading their peers through examination question answers is of a good standard and in marked contrast to the situation reported at the time of the last inspection.

123. Written work at all key stages is neat and well presented, with clear diagrams and logical recording of results. These requirements are taught from entry to the school and standards rise as pupils move up the years. Laboratory discipline is good, and pupils take responsibility for collecting, assembling and using their own apparatus as well as for returning it when work is complete. They willingly help each other over minor difficulties and co-operate well in the sharing of data and equipment. Pupils of all ages handle apparatus safely and competently and pay correct regard to the safety requirements of the lesson. The skills needed to plan, carry out and evaluate a practical investigation are developed at Key Stage 3 and some of these were seen in lessons. Although no complete investigations were attempted by Key Stage 4 pupils during the inspection week, examination of work already completed and questioning of pupils in lessons showed that investigational skills progress steadily and that pupils tackle their GCSE coursework with confidence and competence. This is a further improvement since the last inspection.

124. The standard of teaching is high. Three quarters of the lessons seen were good or very good, the remainder satisfactory – another improvement. As an outcome of good teaching, pupils come to lessons interested in science and expecting to enjoy their lessons. Their motivation is increased by the commitment and enthusiasm of their teachers. Teachers' command of their subjects is a departmental strength and this is especially clear at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form when staff are teaching their own specialisms. High standards are called for and pupils are given plenty of challenges. Lessons are well planned and adequately resourced so that practical work can generally be done in pairs, leading to improved learning. The good quality of pupil-teacher relationships mostly ensures good behaviour and free-flowing question and answer, as well as pupils striving to do well. Good knowledge of pupils' individual problems enables unobtrusive support to be given, especially with literacy problems, which are not confined to pupils with special educational needs. However, the level of in-class support provided is unsatisfactory and many pupils needing this support cannot fulfil their potential.

125. A good pace, plenty of challenge, a good proportion of practical work and a variety of activities (some of them unusual) are among the hallmarks of some of the good lessons. An example was a non-examination group of low-attaining Year 11 boys who had seen how a petrol engine works, using a cut-away model, and followed this by identifying the parts of a real engine using the teacher's car on the hard court nearby. Despite rain arriving in mid-session, their behaviour was exemplary, their interest and concentration were total and the new knowledge gained provided the groundwork for further work in the laboratory. Pupils of all ages are well-mannered, polite to a visitor and enjoy showing their work and answering questions. Correct scientific terminology and spelling are emphasised, and the results of this are clear in pupils' written work. The bright and cheerful displays on laboratory and corridor walls are a source of pride to those who have contributed and also provide good reinforcement of earlier work.

126. More apparatus is awaited so that automated data-logging can be used more frequently than at present, but this lack is presently counter-balanced by the opportunities for pupils to practise their information communication technology skills in word-processing, simulations, data-base work and even examination revision sessions, outside lessons. An unusual feature is that all work submitted by sixth formers for assessment must be word-processed, with data recorded on spreadsheets. The resulting reports are of a very high standard. This situation is a further improvement since the 1995 inspection.

127. The department is very well led. The team has established a positive, good-humoured and supportive environment in which to teach and where pupils can learn. The technician team is extremely efficient and equipment arrives and is removed unobtrusively from laboratories on three floors. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The department has many strengths and is working hard to eradicate the weaknesses identified, but it is acknowledged that some of these – such as the culture of pupils not learning work – are difficult to influence. The department makes an important contribution to pupils' life outside the laboratories, such as Science Week activities, 'road shows', the resident small animals and the environmental area and the annual pet show (which includes the local community). These involve pupils of all ages and levels of attainment.

ART

128. GCSE A*-C results have risen since the last inspection. In 1999, these were higher than in previous recent years, but still below average when compared nationally. Many pupils' skills and spatial awareness on entry are very low, particularly the boys'. By the end of Key Stage 3, boys' attainment is still very significantly below girls', whose standards generally match national expectations. Some classes at Key Stage 3, particularly in Year 8, show an average range of attainment when they work in media other than painting and drawing, for example model-making, construction, collage or printing. In a mixed-media project in Year 8, most pupils understand the concepts of cubism and can draw and paint from observation of still life well enough to create good class murals for the adjacent corridor. Boys' skills levels, particularly in painting and drawing, remain well below expectations during Key Stage 3, reducing attainment at the end of Year 9 to below expectations overall. Attainment at Key Stage 4 varies between Year 11, where standards are still below expectations, and Year 10, where attainment more nearly matches national expectations. Pupils' capabilities in three-dimensional work and mixed media remain the strongest aspects of their work during Key Stage 4. Their weakest areas are in the evaluative aspects, with many pupils, again particularly boys, finding great difficulty in writing for the critical studies required in the GCSE examination. Painting is still below expectations in most pupils' work in Year 11. Attainment in the sixth form is very high by Year 13. Although students find difficulties in moving into a freer, more individually expressive style in Year 12, they progress exceptionally well during Year 13, where standards in the art and crafts/graphics examination are above average for A level.

129. Girls' progress during the key stages is generally good. They learn well in lessons. Many boys, though, do not concentrate well enough to learn to overcome the weaknesses they bring with them on entry. Some boys' attitudes to their work are unsatisfactory, particularly at Key Stage 3. They are wilfully resistant to learning and are restless and distracted in the listening phases of many lessons. Although often very noisy, this minority of boys is sometimes better when actively engaged in practical work. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs relating to learning difficulties often progress well in art. The disturbances are mostly caused by those whose needs relate to behavioural difficulties, and the department needs classroom support if these pupils are to make the progress of which they are capable.

130. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and is often good. Some very good teaching in the sixth form leads to high levels of progress. Department planning now provides for a much better range of media in two and three dimensions in the key stages. Many projects' final outcomes in three dimensions exploit pupils' strengths and interests, and lead to good progress in these areas by the majority of pupils. Some good class management of extremely challenging pupils limits the effects of their poor behaviour so that most pupils can learn properly. In a few classes the management of this behaviour needs to be firmer. Good assessment ensures that pupils' weaknesses are identified, for example that of evaluation in Year 10, and plans put in place to remedy these. The key issue for the department is to

improve the overall attainment of boys. There is no formal monitoring of the quality of teaching by the head of department in order to ensure consistency in classroom performance.

131. Current departmental staffing with two part-time teachers creates some difficulties such as classes taught by more than one teacher and some lack of attendance at department meetings. This leads to less secure continuity and progression in pupils' curriculum than is ideal. The new head of department manages this well. A residual weakness from the last inspection is the inappropriate and insufficient quality and quantity of information and communications technology hardware and software. This prevents pupils' use of IT as a creative tool in the department. Other weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection have been dealt with. These related to standards in examination results, which are higher now, and lack of three-dimensional work, which is now a strength.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

132. The A*-C grades at GCSE in all material areas for design and technology were broadly in line with the national average in 1998 and 1999. During this time the A*-C grades for GCSE systems and control were well below the national average and well above the national averages in textiles. The A*-G grades were broadly in line with national averages for design and technology. Girls outperform boys in the subject, and achieve in line with the national trend for girls. Similarly, boys achieve in line with the national average for boys. Pupils' results in design and technology compare favourably with their results in other subjects. Although the proportion of A/B grades at A level is well below the national average, the proportion is broadly in line with national figures for A-E grades. A level students have attained well in relation to their GCSE grades on entry to the courses.

133. In lessons and other work, by the end of Year 9 the great majority of pupils' attain broadly in line with national expectations in all material areas. A small minority attains above expectations. Pupils complete a range of experimental and investigative tasks in resistant materials, food and textiles, which are well matched to their interests. For example, "design and make" tasks associated with a pop-up greetings card, the land yacht project in Year 8, the marble sorter in Year 9 and a range of projects in food and textiles, satisfactorily and progressively develop pupils' understanding of the principles of designing. Good progress is made by most of the pupils throughout the key stage except in systems and control, where progress is unsatisfactory. In all material areas most pupils steadily develop good presentation and graphicacy skills, with the standard of presentation and graphicacy shown by the highest attainers being very good. However, a very small proportion of the work, mostly by lower-attaining pupils, is not enhanced where the use of felt-tip colour pens is garish and rendering techniques are ineffective. Higher-attaining pupils show good levels of fluency in the use of technical terms, but lower-attaining pupils are hesitant and unsure of the correct terminology. Most pupils show satisfactory levels of creativity in their design work and their product outcomes are well matched to the initial design specification.

134. From a below average level of attainment on entry to the school pupils attain standards that are broadly similar to the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 4. Work seen in all material areas reflects that achieved in recent examination results. Pupils show a good understanding of the principles and processes of designing in a broad range of materials. Initial food technology tasks relate well to product designs and to industrial practice. Pupils also show a satisfactory understanding of the nutritive, sensory, chemical and physical properties of food. In graphics, the great majority show much flair and imagination in their graphical design solutions. Almost all pupils show good skills in using tools, equipment and machinery and are very conscious of the need for safe working practices. Pupils' standards of technical writing and graphical communication skills are good, with clear and detailed annotated sketches used

to explain design ideas. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactory standards in line with their capabilities. In almost all design areas, pupils use information and communications technology well to complete coursework, and although this is mostly word-processing or desktop publishing the work produced is of a good standard. Skills in using computer-aided manufacturing equipment are very much underdeveloped, being limited by a lack of suitable equipment.

135. Standards in the sixth form are good. Students produce innovative and imaginative solutions to design problems. Standards of graphical presentation are generally very good. Work seen in lessons and in students' design folders reflects rising standards. Year 12 graphics work is of a very good standard and is well above expected standards.

136. Teaching ranges in quality from unsatisfactory to very good. Overall, the teaching is at least good in the great majority of lessons in all age groups. In the small proportion of lessons where the teaching is less than satisfactory it is either because of ineffective class management or inappropriate curriculum content for design and technology. Almost all design and technology teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of their subject specialisms. They use a good range of exemplar design material, which is displayed either on workshop walls or in display folders. The exemplars guide and support pupils' design work effectively. The design worksheets that are used provide clear guidelines for design work and effectively challenge and extend the higher attainers. However, some worksheets are insufficiently modified to meet the needs of the lowest attainers. In the main, the teaching ensures that most pupils are well motivated and clearly aware of what they need to do in their projects. In many lessons, good humour prevails and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. The great majority of pupils respond well to the teaching styles adopted and show satisfactory and often good interest levels. Concentration spans are variable but generally satisfactory, with most pupils making good and sometimes very good progress in lessons. Homework is set regularly and effectively extends the available curriculum time in most material areas. Teachers give good verbal feedback to pupils on their progress. The assessment procedures are good and incorporate 'individual action plans' and targets for pupils, which are systematically monitored. The system effectively enables pupils to understand how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. There is an imbalance in the provision of specialist rooms which affects the teaching of food technology. The technician makes an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning in resistant materials, but technician time is insufficient to support the food and textiles areas effectively. Resources are inadequate in relation to the provision of suitable equipment, which militates against effective teaching of computer-aided manufacturing.

137. The leadership and management of design and technology are very good. Teaching is monitored once a term but the records kept are inadequate. The curriculum leader and other senior staff within design and technology monitor standards effectively and use their findings to deal with any curriculum issues that occur. Good progress has been made in resolving most of the issues identified in the last report. The department as a whole approached the findings of the last inspection in a positive manner and standards, overall, have improved slightly.

GEOGRAPHY

138. Attainment is below expectations at Key Stage 3, and broadly in line with expectations at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectations. GCSE grades A*-C were in line with national averages in 1997 and 1998 but fell in 1999 because of the poor performance of a group of boys. The percentage of A*-G grades is slightly above the national average. Since 1997 geography results have been consistently above the average results for the school. A level results for grades A/B have been

below national averages and fell further in 1999. Grades A-E have been rising and were above the national average in 1999. Groups have been small which makes comparisons with national figures misleading, but the numbers taking the subject have been rising steadily since 1997.

139. Pupils' work seen during the inspection shows that attainment in current Key Stage 3 classes is in line with expectations overall, with pupils at all levels of attainment making satisfactory progress. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils are proficient in many geographical skills, such as map work, the construction and interpretation of tables and graphs and the ability to compare and contrast two different places such as Japan and the United Kingdom. They understand the factors affecting the formation of landscapes, the growth of populations and the major features of world weather and climate. Higher attaining pupils are capable of extended writing to describe, explain and develop ideas. Many lower attaining pupils have less well developed presentation and writing skills. Most pupils have a satisfactory grasp of geographical vocabulary. Attainment in current Key Stage 4 classes is in line with expectations. Year 11 pupils have prepared some impressive coursework following their fieldwork investigations. The high attainers can collect the necessary information to support their investigations. They have knowledge and understanding about environmental pollution, the effects of tourism, volcanic activity and the formation of landscapes. The low attainers have a more limited range of skills and understanding and do not develop their ideas to the same extent. Standards in the sixth form are above expectations for the course. The work of the current Year 12 and Year 13 groups is well organised and well presented, with evidence of in-depth investigations and of the appropriate use of information and communications technology.

140. Standards of literacy support work effectively. Pupils regularly have opportunities to read aloud in class and are encouraged to write in their own words at every opportunity. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory, but mathematical ideas do not receive the same amount of attention as reading and writing.

141. Progress is satisfactory during Key Stage 3 and good during Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. It is most notable in lessons where the best use is made of the time available and where the pupils are given challenging tasks. For example in a Year 10 lesson, pupils were constructing rainfall graphs on a transept of Britain in order to discuss the factors affecting rainfall and temperature. Where the work is more slowly paced and there is no encouragement for pupils to think for themselves, progress is limited. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because their needs are well catered for by specially designed worksheets and tasks. Where a classroom assistant is present progress is good because work is broken down into small but achievable targets for some pupils, whilst others are given higher level extension tasks.

142. Pupils' attitudes are generally good, though there are some pupils, particularly in Year 11, who have lost interest in the subject, which has resulted in poor behaviour. In some Key Stage 3 classes there was occasional inattention but it was quickly and firmly dealt with by the teacher. Relationships between pupils were generally co-operative and helpful. Responses to questions and other stimuli were observant and enthusiastic.

143. The quality of teaching is good overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. For example, sixth form students are helped in the planning of their individual studies for A level by a detailed handbook written by their teacher. Planning and preparation are very good throughout the department. However, although lessons are always well structured there is not enough variety in teaching styles and not enough learning involving first-hand observation and processing of information. Also, there is not enough use of information and communications technology at Key Stage 3. Management of pupils and classroom relationships are good, providing a secure environment for learning to take place. The needs

of pupils of all abilities are met; for example, in a Year 7 lesson on industry there were several interpretations of the learning tasks so that all pupils could make equal progress. Marking and assessment are excellent, and the use of records to monitor the progress of pupils is a strength of the department.

144. The department is well managed by an enthusiastic head of department who has developed strong leadership and monitors both teaching and pupils' work effectively. Documentation is thorough and up to date, and staff and pupils alike are well supported.

145. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress. There has been improvement in systems for assessment, recording and target setting, which are now excellent. The provision of information and communications technology and fieldwork has improved, though both of these areas need further development, as do the range and variety of learning tasks given to pupils. The use of modified teaching materials and learning tasks for pupils with special educational needs, and for high-attaining pupils, has been well developed.

HISTORY

146. Attainment is below the standards expected nationally. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are well below average. GCSE results are generally well below average. Sixth form groups are very small, with only two candidates in 1999. This makes national comparisons unhelpful, but results are, nevertheless, always low. In all classes seen during the inspection, work was better than results suggest and broadly in line with national expectations. The new curriculum leader and new examination syllabus and scheme of work for Key Stage 4 are contributing to these higher standards. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have a sense of history. For example, Year 7 pupils produced some impressive thoughts after interviewing parents and family on the most important events of the millennium. Pupils use source material, but often at a descriptive level and for comprehension exercises and many are not able to use them to consider different interpretations of events. At Key Stage 4, most pupils have a good grasp of the development of medicine and many can explain the developments in castle building. A significant minority see this as a descriptive task and rely heavily on the teacher's notes. Sixth form students can outline the political, social and economic developments in Nazi Germany and have a good understanding of the use of propaganda. Many students have a very limited background in religious studies and this hampers their understanding of the changes and consequences of the Reformation.

147. Overall, learning is now satisfactory. In all lessons pupils acquire new knowledge. This is especially true in the sixth form where students accumulate enormous files of material. Some students arrange these well and can use them as a good reference source, but many need better skills of organisation and file management. Throughout the sixth form students develop good analytical skills, learn to weigh up evidence and to present their conclusions. They learn to evaluate the views of a variety of historians and to assemble their own evidence.

148. At Key Stage 3, pupils tend to gain comprehension skills at the expense of developing more analytical awareness. Their factual recall over short periods is satisfactory, but their learning over longer periods is not secure. Most pupils in Year 7 failed to link work on medieval Bristol with the 'Matthew' moored in the harbour. Very few Year 8 pupils could provide information on the Civil War without reference to their exercise books. Key Stage 4 pupils learn about changes and consequences, developments over time and changing ideas in medicine and in the treatment of minority groups, such as the North American Indians. Their understanding of evidence and the use of sources develops, but many pupils find this aspect difficult and prefer to rely on teachers too much. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, but they receive insufficient in-class support.

149. Teaching is at least satisfactory and in many cases good. Teaching in the sixth form is good. All teachers are good historians and have a comprehensive grounding in their subject. Their experience of examination work is satisfactory and they are able to support pupils at GCSE and in the sixth form with a high degree of professionalism. At Key Stage 3, teachers do not make enough use of the National Curriculum levels with the result that most pupils do not know the standard at which they are working and have sufficient information about how they could improve. Teaching is generally secure but rarely adventurous or exciting. All teachers develop good working relationships with pupils. Some unsatisfactory features of lessons include unclear lesson objectives and slow pace. Learning is not always sharply focussed and in too many lessons there is a leisurely approach. The management of pupils is good and ensures that potential conflicts are minimised; this results in some unacceptable behaviour not being challenged. This is notable in Year 7 classes where a few very difficult boys determine the pace of the lesson for all pupils. During the inspection, a limited range of teaching styles was observed and, overall, there is too much emphasis on written material and school-produced information sheets. These are generally of good quality but limit pupils to comprehension-type exercises and do not extend their investigative or analytical skills sufficiently. In some lessons, there is good use of material that has been adapted to the specific needs of pupils and careful use is made of the limited availability of support assistants. Marking of work is done diligently, but there is a lack of consistency across the department. Whilst there are some very good examples of helpful and constructive comments, much of the marking is superficial. Teachers have not yet implemented their plans for greater use of information and communications technology to enhance pupils' learning. The homework programme is not consistently implemented and does not provide pupils with adequate opportunities to develop independent learning skills or pursue aspects of work in depth.

150. The department is managed well with clear and encouraging leadership. The greater attention given to lesson planning and to the monitoring of the quality of pupils' work is beginning to have a beneficial effect on standards.

INFORMATION and COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

151. There are no GCSE or A level courses in information and communications technology.

152. By the end of Year 9, the great majority of pupils attain broadly in line with national expectations in communicating information through word processing and desktop publishing. Despite the strengths in this area, pupils' attainment is generally below national expectations in modelling, measuring and control technology. The recently introduced timetabled information and communications technology lessons for all pupils at Key Stage 3 are having a positive effect on standards and enable most pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in these areas to a greater depth. However, the progress made by pupils in lessons is only just satisfactory and is affected by large class sizes and a limited number of computers in each teaching room. Most pupils show a good understanding of the hardware and the software used. Almost all have satisfactory keyboarding skills. They use the mouse well to negotiate icons, menus and functions when loading the required software from the network. Almost all show a positive attitude to learning and make satisfactory progress in lessons. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their work and most have a satisfactory grasp of the basic technical vocabulary of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactory standards in line with their capabilities.

153. By the end of Key Stage 4, the great majority of pupils attain below national expectations. The lack of co-ordinated opportunities for all pupils to develop their information technology and communication skills through planned, systematic or sustained provision at Key

Stage 4 affects the overall standards. Across the curriculum a small minority of subjects have yet to identify how they intend to teach the National Curriculum requirements for information technology to be delivered in their schemes of work. Other subjects make good provision and use information and communications technology well. In many subjects pupils make good use of computers to word-process or desktop-publish their coursework, but practice is uneven within subjects and wholly dependent on staff interest and expertise. The research of topics using CD ROM and the Internet and widespread use of spreadsheets for modelling or graph-work remain underdeveloped throughout Key Stage 4.

154. The great majority of students in the sixth form have satisfactory and often good skills in word-processing, desktop publishing and in using the computer for researching topics, using the Internet. Standards of competence in information and communications technology are very good in the sixth form vocational courses.

155. In all the timetabled lessons observed the teaching was never less than satisfactory, and was good or better in most. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and effectively stimulate pupils' interest and motivation. Word-processing and desktop publishing applications are explained effectively through clear, straightforward, effective demonstrations of the applications. Teachers provide challenging and interesting tasks that are well matched to pupils' interests and ability in using the software. The problems posed build effectively on pupils' prior knowledge and conceptual understanding. Teachers give high levels of individual support and guidance. The teaching styles and strategies adopted have a positive impact on pupils' learning. As a result, most pupils show satisfactory and often good interest levels, sustain their concentration for appropriate spans of time and generally make satisfactory progress in developing their skills. Teachers are good at testing pupils' understanding of the required tasks. Worksheets, produced within the department, successfully identify learning objectives. However, some tasks and written instructions in the worksheets are insufficiently modified to suit the needs of the lowest-attaining pupils. The technician provides good support for teachers and pupils alike and contributes effectively to pupils' learning. The technician time available is insufficient to support all the resources for the information and communications technology available in the school.

156. The school approached the findings of the last inspection in a very positive manner. Major investment has been made in improving the resources, including the introduction of innovative software, which is having a positive effect on pupils' interest and motivation. The provision does not yet fully meet the entitlements of pupils or the assessment requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

157. Almost all pupils study French or German in Years 7-11. Since the last inspection, French GCSE results have been just above national averages. German GCSE results have been below national averages. The results in French have been above those for most other subjects in the school, whereas German results have been broadly similar. A level results in French and German have been in line with national standards. The number of pupils in Year 9 who have reached nationally expected standards in French and German in listening, speaking, reading and writing is average. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils are stronger in listening, speaking and reading, and weaker in writing. When speaking, Year 7 French pupils took a role from the textbook, and presented themselves to a partner. Some then performed the role for the whole class. When listening, Year 8 German pupils heard a tape and had to state whether the people liked or disliked various leisure activities. When reading, Year 10 German pupils could understand a text about zoos and express opinions about zoos. A Year 10 French group spent the lesson discussing school, and the written homework was to write opinions with

reasons about life in school. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing: however, pupils make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. Pupils do not check their written work carefully enough. Girls usually attain better results than boys. There are no significant variations between pupils of different ethnicity, background, or ability. Pupils have regular sessions reading in the library: these contribute to their general literacy and develop their French and German skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries. However, insufficient spoken use of the languages, insufficient pair work, and the errors pupils make in written work are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards.

158. The department has made good progress in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection report. A strategy has been developed for improving standards, and this is having an effect at all levels.

159. Overall the quality of teaching is good at both key stages and in the sixth form. It is sometimes satisfactory and sometimes very good; it is never unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching improves standards and ensures satisfactory or good progress. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in the foreign languages, project their voices clearly, and have good accents in the languages they teach. Most use the foreign languages for large parts of the lesson, but some do not use them enough. They use overhead projectors and other resources very effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are generally good. Time is used well, and teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs or groups: some do not use pair work sufficiently. Staff display pupils' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the pupils' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework is set regularly. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, and provides good support for these pupils. Teachers manage classes well. In a Year 10 French class, six pupils worked on computers, recreating from memory an amusing text about school life. The teacher showed the rest of the pupils a list of classes in the French school system, and pupils confirmed them in French. He then played a tape where French pupils gave opinions about aspects of school life, and asked pupils to give opinions and reasons about what they had heard. Next he asked pupils to report what others had said. Finally, some pupils made statements with reasons to the whole class. In this lesson the pupils were actively involved throughout, worked very well on the different tasks, and made very good progress.

160. The vast majority of pupils behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is usually good or very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. A number of pupils show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs and groups, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role-plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential. Most pupils, including the highest and lowest attainers and those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons at both key stages and in the sixth form.

161. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. There is equality of access for all pupils to a first foreign language. However, the second foreign language, Spanish, is currently taught in twilight time for only one hour per week in Years 9, 10 and 11. These arrangements are unsatisfactory. The head of modern languages monitors effectively the progress of pupils in both languages. The department is very well led and organised, has prioritised development plans, and works well as a team. The department lacks sufficient textbooks, magazines, and computer software. Visits and exchanges to France and Germany, the school's Languages Show, and residential weekends speaking French and German,

encourage social interaction, personal responsibility and improve language competence. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most pupils, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages and the head of German have a positive effect on standards.

MUSIC

162. Standards in music at Key Stages 3 and 4 are unsatisfactorily low. There is no provision for music in the sixth form.

163. In Year 7, no baseline assessments are made. A few pupils are evidently talented but, for the majority, standards are very low, commonly less than expected at Key Stage 2 and, in many cases, even Key Stage 1. Teacher assessments in Year 9 in 1999 were found by the inspector to be unreliable and inconsistent. Observations confirm that although attainment generally improves during the key stage it remains, for most pupils, significantly below national expectations, especially in respect of the depth, breadth and range of skills, knowledge and understanding expected at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils in Year 9 confuse the most basic concepts, for example movement upwards or downwards, whilst many are insecure in their knowledge of simple musical notations. Such shortcomings require more rigorously focused and sensitively adapted work, targeting under-performing pupils and their specific needs. Singing, although not well-developed, occurs in classes at Key Stage 3 where there is considerable potential. However, pupils find it difficult to maintain an independent part, tending to shout to sustain their part against others, with consequently raucous tone.

164. At Key Stage 4, small numbers of committed pupils take GCSE. Of 15 students entered in 1999, almost all gained grades A*-G and over a third gained grades A*-C. These results were well below those in 1998 when they were, unusually, in line with national standards. The achievement of girls and boys compared to one another is very inconsistent. In the last six years there has been only one A level student, who gained a creditable grade B. Two students are expected to begin their A level music course in this autumn. These achievements complement those of 6 per cent of the school population who take instrumental lessons, some taking graded examinations. Their results are not analysed or published in the governors' report in the way that other examination results appear.

165. Attitudes to music vary widely. At Key Stage 4 and in instrumental lessons, pupils are keen to succeed and settle well to work with increasing independence and with no behavioural disturbance. This has an impact upon standards at Key Stage 4 and satisfaction in the results achieved, especially for a number of pupils with special educational needs who make good progress. In contrast, at Key Stage 3, there is, in many classes, a small but significant number of pupils who seek or attract attention by discourteous and occasionally poor behaviour. Teachers try to manage such situations sensitively and positively. However, confrontations distract the whole class, impeding teaching and learning with an evident and damaging impact upon standards.

166. The quality of teaching is at least good in four fifths of lessons and very good in a third. It is characterised by energy, commitment and dynamism. Then, teachers make clear to pupils the learning objectives and check that they are met by constantly monitoring work in progress. Such good teaching inspires comparable responses from pupils, although they are sometimes hard won, as in a Year 9 class where some disaffected pupils were seen, but good behaviour management on the teacher's part ensured that progress was made. Teachers show a care for their pupils, which is particularly evident in the context of the more individualised work at Key Stage 4 and in instrumental lessons. Unsatisfactory teaching is rare. When it occurs, it relates to pupils' poor behaviour and challenges to class management. There is a lack of rigorous self-evaluative assessment, which allows teachers and pupils to understand how well they doing,

particularly because there is no reference point established by baseline assessment of pupils on entry to the school. However, whilst the caring attitudes of teachers are very evident at Key Stage 3, they are frequently challenged by the poor attitudes and insensitivity of a significant minority of pupils who have a disruptive influence that depresses standards. Class teachers are often working harder than their pupils!

167. The well-qualified and experienced school music staff are led well and supported by seven visiting instrumental teachers. However, no support was seen in any music class for those pupils with special educational needs and/or statements and there is only informal monitoring of all pupils' progress. This necessarily places extra pressures upon both the pupils and class teachers in a school where there are relatively high numbers of such pupils. In one music class almost half the pupils are on the special educational needs register! The most talented pupils at Key Stage 3 are commonly involved in the work of the whole class, only rarely given separate tasks or extending challenges. Lesson planning follows the school's revised curriculum which has been substantially modified and improved since the last inspection. However, there remains much to be done, especially in relation to the appropriate application of differentiation, which remains mostly by outcome.

168. Learning is for most pupils satisfactory. The commitment of pupils which good quality teaching inspires is evident in most pupils' focus upon work and their growing facility. However, it is too often compromised by the lack of appropriate and shared understandings of assessment. Analysis of pupils' work and discussion with them show that there is a proper emphasis on performing and composing, but listening skills need substantial development. In all age groups but especially at Key Stage 3, pupils appear uncertain of their own achievements, lacking confidence in their present attainments and therefore tentative in their efforts to enhance them. Assessment schemes, which should include self-assessment, are being revised to enable better data analysis, to inform planning and provide more reliable measures of progress in learning.

169. Accommodation is adequate for whole-class teaching. However, the acoustic security of rooms one from another and from the rest of the school is poor and has led to complaints by other staff especially when visiting music teachers are using any or all of the three practice/group-teaching rooms. Pupils increasingly benefit from the good resources available, particularly the recently acquired keyboard sequencers and computer music-workstations and the Samba and Steel-pan Bands which enhance the cultural diversity of provision. Extra-curricular activities include a choir, orchestra and a jazz group, which performed very well in a lunchtime concert.

170. Since the last inspection in 1995 the time allocated to music has been improved to approach the nationally recommended amounts of contact time for the National Curriculum. The schemes of work and lesson plans have been modified and improved but there remain shortcomings, so that progress in improvement is limited.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

171. No lessons were observed in Year 9 because the pupils were taking examinations. Key Stage 3 judgements are based on observations of lessons in Years 7 and 8. These lessons, together with the teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 and discussion with teachers and pupils, indicate that attainment in physical education is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. In tennis, the majority of boys in Year 8 have a knowledge of stroke technique and are able to successfully play short rallies with a partner. In athletics boys threw the indoor javelins with co-ordination and control. Girls have an

understanding of the basic skills and tactics of athletics and rounders. Girls are supportive of one another and have good co-operative and team skills

172. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, results at grades A*-C were better than national averages. Girls outperformed boys and both boys and girls attained above the school's average points score for GCSE. In 1997 and 1998, results were of a broadly equivalent quality. In GCSE lessons and in other work, overall standards are in line with national expectations but a significant proportion of boys in the current Year 11 have low literacy skills and this affects their overall performance in theory work. A few pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve above average in their theory work, but the majority of pupils attain higher standards in their practical activities than in the theory aspect of the examination course. Files are mostly well presented and well organised. Pupils in Year 10 have a good knowledge of the body systems and training methods.

173. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils attain expected standards in most activities. Boys in Year 11 have skill, speed and stamina when playing indoor football and an understanding of effective sprinting technique in athletics. The girls when playing benchball and rounders organise themselves well and show tactical awareness. The majority of pupils understand and apply basic safety principles in their activities.

174. No A-C grades were achieved by the five students entered for A level in 1998. Teachers' marking, lessons observed and scrutiny of written work indicate that the attainment of the majority of students in Years 12 and 13 on the A level course is above national expectations. They have, for example, a well-developed knowledge of anatomy and physiology and well above average attainment in individual sports.

175. The attainment of some individual pupils and teams is very good. They play football, hockey, netball, rugby and athletics at district, regional and county levels and two girls represent national teams. Pupils from all year groups are not confident when comparing and commenting on the skills of others and using this understanding to improve their own performance. All pupils are able to prepare for exercise effectively and have an understanding of the value of health and fitness.

176. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory or better and often good or very good. Pupils make sufficient progress in all lessons and in two-thirds of lessons they make good or very good progress. Teachers have good subject expertise. They share clear objectives with the pupils at the start of lessons and are able to deal with pupil responses effectively. Teaching does not always give sufficient independent learning opportunities to encourage the pupils' development of planning and evaluative skills. Teachers' recording, marking and assessment procedures are very thorough for A level and GCSE courses. Assessment at Key Stage 3 has been developed to meet the new National Curriculum guidelines.

177. The department has carefully considered the organisation of teaching groups. Classes are taught in mixed-ability and single-gender groups. When the range of ability in the whole class group demands greater flexibility and guidance than whole group tasks, teachers do not always sub-divide the group into small groups according to attainment. However, they circulate well to extend the more talented pupils and help those needing more practice. In such lessons, for example for boys' tennis, where pupils are divided by attainment and appropriate tasks are set, very good progress is made by all the boys. Disabled pupils are appropriately integrated in lessons, but they need additional support to ensure their good progress. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are based on mutual respect. Pupils are prepared to try hard to achieve new targets set by their teachers. It is these good relationships which allow the teachers to manage their teaching groups with ease.

178. Teachers miss opportunities to promote literacy skills. Key words are displayed in the corridor but subject-specific vocabulary is not fully discussed with pupils, especially at Key Stage 3. More consistent use of additional sources of reference, for example activity cards, such as those used in athletics, are needed to extend pupils' understanding of the evaluation strand of the National Curriculum.

179. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic in their lessons. They behave well. They work well together in small groups and pairs. This positive attitude of pupils promotes their learning with the exception of the lower attaining boys in Year 11 who take little pride in their written work and lack concentration in theory lessons. The interest pupils have in the subject is shown by the numbers who opt to study GCSE and A level courses. It is disappointing that low numbers of pupils attend the extra-curricular activities.

180. The very good indoor and outdoor facilities are well maintained and enhance the learning of pupils. The recently appointed leader of the department has had little opportunity to address all the issues identified in the last report and little was tackled before her appointment. However, assessment has been successfully reviewed and there is now a better balance of activities in the planned curriculum. Teaching is not monitored regularly to ensure all strands of the National Curriculum are addressed fully and to ensure that pupils with disabilities are fully supported. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have been maintained at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching remains good and pupils' progress has improved.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

181. Analysis of the 1999 GCSE full course results in religious education shows that the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well above the national average. This is borne out in the lessons seen and is an improvement since the last inspection. The trend since 1997 in these examinations has been one of improvement. In the results for the short course GCSE almost all pupils gained grades between A* and G in 1999. All pupils at Key Stage 4 take the short GCSE course, unless they choose to study the full course, which more than 50 pupils do. By the end of the key stage, pupils attain at least in line with the expectations of the examination syllabus. The results for the 1999 examinations at grades A*-G were very good.

182. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Most pupils understand the origins of the religions they have studied. For example, they understand that Sikhism began among Muslims and Hindus in Asia and that Guru Nanak declared a "middle way", which was attached to neither religion. In work about creation in Year 9, pupils offered their views with confidence and after considering the various aspects, both religious and scientific. Year 7 demonstrated that they knew some of the Hindu gods and were able to talk about the differences between Brahma and Brahman. Pupils have studied difficult questions such as, 'who made God', and 'what part does the big bang play in creation'. They have a satisfactory knowledge of Bible stories and have written their own modern-day parables.

183. Those who study the full course attain above expectations. Pupils were seen engaged in work about the importance of the State of Israel. They displayed an above average depth of knowledge, including details about the Oslo summit meeting, and issues about Palestinian lands. They are able to put their studies into contemporary settings. For example, they have considered whether Muhammad (pbuh) would be successful in his message to day. Others have written their opinions about arranged marriages, both for and against.

184. Pupils across Key Stages 3 and 4 make good progress, including those who have special educational needs. Students in the sixth form do not have formal lessons but have a religious education conference each year.

185. Teaching and learning are at least good, with some lessons that are very good. Teachers plan carefully and offer good challenges to pupils. They involve pupils actively in lessons, which means that pupils' interest is maintained. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were seen helping the teacher demonstrate the Hindu story of the blind men and the elephant. An electric kettle was substituted to good effect, in the absence of an elephant! Pupils acquire new knowledge well because of this challenge and involvement. They increase their understanding of topics well in class discussions and when researching facts and then reporting back to the whole class. Teachers encourage pupils to think about the topics, rather than only reading about them. For example, Year 8 were asked to think of promises they might make, such as not to bite their nails in future: the work then moved on to consider covenants in the Old Testament, which are based on promises between God and man.

186. There is a large team of teachers involved in religious education, but the non-specialist training of many of them has nothing but good effect on the outcomes of teaching and learning, which remain good overall. Teachers bring their own levels of expertise, make the lesson interesting, and achieve the learning objectives that they set, well.

187. As a result of this good teaching and management of classes, pupils enjoy religious education and generally behave well in lessons. On the very few occasions where behaviour seemed to be deteriorating, the teachers overcame this well and revitalised the lesson to motivate these pupils.

188. In spite of the lack of a head of department at this time, the team of teachers and the management team of the school continue to give religious education a good profile, and the outcomes are good. Resources have been improved and they are now good, with books, video tapes and artefacts for the work planned. Accommodation, which is adequate for delivery of the curriculum, is scattered throughout the school, although there are two rooms that form the 'base' for the subject.

189. There has been satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection, namely in teaching, resources and the allocation of time to the subject, which now meets statutory requirements.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

190. Business education courses are offered in GCSE business studies at Key Stage 4, and, in the sixth form, A and A/S levels, as well as GNVQ advanced and intermediate business. Attainment in GCSE was above average in 1999 and 1997; in 1998 it was above national averages at grades A*-G but at grades A*-C slightly below average. The performance of girls was higher than that of boys at the higher grades; however, both genders achieved 100 per cent success in GCSE pass grades in 1999, with results in the two previous years almost as good. Pupils' performance in business studies has shown an upward trend in recent years, and individual candidates' results are better than in the other GCSE subjects they take.

191. Attainment in sixth form business studies is well above national averages at A/S and A levels for 1998 and 1999, although A level business studies candidates obtain fewer top grades (A/B) than nationally. Attainment is also above national expectations in GNVQ intermediate and advanced business and the trend has been upwards since 1997. In 1999 GNVQ candidates achieved well above average proportions of merits and distinctions at advanced

level, as had been the case in 1998, and results in intermediate business in 1997 and 1998 were outstanding.

192. The work seen during the inspection was at least in line with national expectations over the attainment range at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, but slightly below average at the higher end in both GCSE and GCE levels. At Key Stage 4, the proportion sitting the higher tier paper (around a third of all pupils) indicates a slightly lower attainment than in 1999, but reflects differences in this year group's ability, as revealed by standardised tests. All the pupils have a satisfactory understanding of business practice and procedures, and confidence in handling numerical and financial processes, as when they examine the effects of varying rates of exchange on imports and exports, or calculate profits and losses in stock-market trading. In a lesson on multinationals, pupils offered thought-provoking suggestions when identifying a range of ethical issues faced by companies planning to expand into world markets.

193. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are good, and at times very good. For example, a Year 13 student has been awarded the maximum marks by the A level examination board for his human resources module, and another student achieved well over 90 per cent in the same examination. GNVQ students' attainments are also above national expectations. GNVQ students demonstrate very good planning and presentational skills, illustrated particularly in their use of information and communications technology, and are confident in applying their knowledge of business processes and practices to a wide range of situations.

194. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good. They clearly enjoy their study of the subject, at each level, and exhibit very good relationships with their teachers and with each other. The head of department's strategies for the grouping of pupils at Key Stage 4 minimise the potential disruption caused by a minority of pupils, and contribute to the maintenance of a productive learning environment for the majority. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and sixth form students are encouraged to take additional responsibility for their own progress through a very good departmental monitoring and tracking system.

195. The quality of teaching in business education is very good in well over half of all lessons, and good in the remainder. Good teaching is the major contributory factor to achievement in this department. The teaching team communicates their interest and enthusiasm for business education, and draws effectively on their previous business and commercial experience. The management and administration of the department are very good. Teachers meet regularly, both formally and informally, and are thus able to monitor the progress of individual pupils, share good practice and teaching resources, develop a wide range of appropriate learning experiences for their classes, and provide consistent standards of marking, assessment and moderation of pupils' and students' work. They also apply consistently high expectations of good behaviour and presentation of work. Some departmental practices, such as the spelling tests, which are held at the start of every lesson at Key Stage 4, not only enhance skills in using business terminology but also contribute to raising general standards of literacy. It is a strength of the department that the same staff are teaching across the age range, and also on GNVQ courses. Strong links exist with local businesses, and pupils and students are well prepared prior to receiving outside speakers, or visiting companies. Although resources are generally adequate, the lack of access to information and communications technology, especially in business classrooms, is a major disadvantage. Pupils and students receive appropriate assistance in the acquisition of key skills, including information and communications technology. Were it not for the considerable amount of work produced on home computers, the high standards of presentation achieved would not be possible.

GCE A LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

196. Attainment in A level psychology in 1999, the first year in which the subject was offered at the school, was well below national averages. The work seen during the inspection, however, indicates that attainment is now broadly in line with national expectations. Candidates should be able to achieve broadly average results this year, with the expectation of a greater proportion of higher grade passes in the following year. Year 13 students are able to use a range of appropriate illustrations, for example in their evaluation of complex models of the mental systems associated with the processes and structure of memory. They are also sufficiently knowledgeable about the content of the whole course for a student to be able to offer a critique of a recently-published text, which she felt did not do justice to an aspect of comparative psychology in which she was interested.

197. Teaching is very good. The staff demonstrate a keen interest in and knowledge of the subject, employ skilful questioning techniques, and have very good strategies for supporting and encouraging their students to develop confidence, as with statistical processes, or the critical evaluation of students' own essays and test questions. Teachers make efforts to ensure that students develop confidence as independent learners. It is particularly noteworthy that staff provide a summer 'taster course' to enable pupils in Year 11 to find out what a sixth form course in psychology would entail, in order to help them make informed choices before the start of the autumn term.

198. The first group of sixth formers taking A level sociology will be examined in 2000. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that candidates are on course to achieve results in line with national averages, with opportunities for success across the whole grade range. Year 12 students also demonstrate levels of attainment in line with national expectations.

199. The teaching of sociology is very good and is sometimes excellent. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and thorough planning ensure that students are encouraged to be independent learners, and are given a very good preparation for their examination, as well as mirroring their teacher's interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Lessons provide a wide range of learning experiences, and include many innovative study strategies designed or prepared by the teacher, for example a study guide written to aid students' preparations for their final examination. Students have a very good understanding of sociological theories and perspectives, and are able to apply a range of investigative processes to their coursework. They use appropriate references to empirical studies, make critical appraisals in their evaluations of methodology or evidence bases, and incorporate "post-modernism" ideas in their sociological explanations.

200. The classroom base is common to both sociology and psychology, and the wall displays for each subject reflect the high quality of work achieved in both year groups and both subjects.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

201. Since the last inspection, vocational courses have been consolidated and expanded. In addition to GNVQ business (reported under business education) there are programmes in intermediate and advanced health and social care, and in leisure and tourism, and the programme will be further expanded in September 2000 when GNVQ Part One in these two subject areas is offered as an option at Key Stage 4. Students' independent learning skills are now actively and consistently encouraged, and standards of attainment have improved steadily since the last inspection.

202. In 1999, attainment in intermediate leisure and tourism was well above national averages, although no distinction grade was achieved. Attainment was similar in previous

years. Attainment in intermediate health and social care was below national averages at merit and distinction level, but above in overall success rates. This represents attainment slightly below that of 1998, the first year this intermediate course was made available at the school. Work seen during the inspection at intermediate level, in both these subjects, confirms that students are producing work well in line with national expectations.

203. In the advanced courses now offered in both these subjects, the level of work inspected indicates completion and pass rates above national expectations, although the proportion of students achieving merits and distinctions in health and social care is a little below average. The frequent staff changes experienced by students on this course, and the resultant lack of regular liaison between staff, have had an effect on learners' confidence and consequently their ability to work independently - a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of merit or distinction grades. The work of the first cohort of students taking the advanced leisure and tourism programme indicates that standards of attainment will be at least comparable with national expectations.

204. Students on all three GNVQ subject courses have developed very good planning, presentational, communication and research skills. Many, particularly the business candidates, demonstrate very high levels of expertise in the use of information and communications technology. Work in individual portfolios, as well as on classroom walls, is of a very good standard. For example, a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the history of the health service, since 1944, was produced by a health and social care student. Communication skills were well illustrated by a presentation on marketing given by two GNVQ business sixth formers to a Year 10 business studies class. Very good use is made of contacts with outside agencies, for example health and social care students' work experience in a residential care home, which has resulted in students voluntarily continuing their contacts with the residents. Leisure and tourism students make good use of local facilities when investigating the differences between leisure and physical recreation, or researching the concept of fitness, and business students and pupils have strong links with other local companies for their case studies.

205. Teaching standards in all GNVQ classes are never less than satisfactory. In 40 per cent of lessons it was good and in a further 40 per cent it was very good. It is particularly pleasing to note the degree to which recently appointed and temporary staff have been successful in meeting students' needs. Accommodation for GNVQ subjects is reasonably good, with separate base rooms for each specialism, and reference texts and resources are adequate. The lack of computers, in these base rooms, is a disadvantage especially for those on the health and social care course, as their classroom is not in close proximity to the school's computer facilities.

206. Moderation and assessment procedures are now carried out to the satisfaction of external verifiers. However, standards would be further enhanced if the excellent practices demonstrated by the business team, such as frequent formal and informal meetings for monitoring, tracking and planning, were to be carried out in the other subject specialisms, particularly in health and social care.