

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PRIORY COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Weston-Super-Mare

LEA area: North West Somerset

Unique reference number: 109316

Headteacher: Mr Paul MacIntyre

Reporting inspector: Nigel Pett  
17331

Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> May 2001

Inspection number: 186257

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Queens Way Weston-Super-Mare Avon
Postcode:	BS22 6BP
Telephone number:	(01934) 511411
Fax number:	(01934) 520199
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Chris Flint
Date of previous inspection:	December 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17331	N Pett	Registered inspector		The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9710	Mrs R Burgess	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3758	A Barringer	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
29896	Mrs S Mullett	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30433	Dr C Corp	Team inspector	Science	
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
8185	P Kendall	Team inspector	Art	
12118	A Paver	Team inspector	Geography	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
8645	D Ward	Team inspector	Music	
12003	Dr A Marfleet	Team inspector	Religious education	
8873	Mrs C Evers	Team inspector	History Equal opportunities	
4749	M Ash	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
22042	J Challands	Team inspector	Physical education	
13101	I Kell	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd  
7 Hill Street  
Bristol  
BS1 5RW

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>5 - 8</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>9 - 11</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>11 - 12</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?</b>	<b>12 - 14</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?</b>	<b>14 - 15</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>16 - 18</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>20 - 24</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>25 - 42</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This community school with technology college status is situated on the outskirts of the resort town of Weston-super-Mare. There are 996 students on roll aged between 11 and 16, making it similar in size to secondary schools nationally. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average and, whilst students come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds, a significant minority are disadvantaged. There are very few students from ethnic minority heritage, and the number of students not having English as their first language is below the national average. The proportion of students identified with special educational needs is well above the national average. Fifty-three students hold statements to address their specific needs. There is a hearing impaired resource base for eight students and a Key Stage 3 behaviour support base. Attainment on entry is generally below average. The school's aims seek to provide for the academic and personal development of all of its students and to develop 'Lifelong Learning' opportunities for the wider community.

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

This is an improving school. Many students achieve grades in GCSE examinations that are good for their prior attainment, but a minority underachieve. The overall quality of teaching is good. The school is benefiting from the strong leadership of the new headteacher and has recognised the need to revise its management and development planning structures to improve standards and effectiveness. It gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Enables a significant number of its students to do well in GCSE examinations.
- Teaches effectively to promote students' good progress, especially in the humanities and music
- Effectively promotes students' personal development, and provides good guidance.
- Makes very good provision for extra-curricular activities.
- Links very effectively with the local business and education communities.
- Provides a good community education programme.

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

- Better consistency in standards overall and particularly in the development of students' literacy, numeracy and computer skills.
- The use of assessment procedures, quality of marking and the information to parents about students' progress.
- Extending the provision for students with special educational needs.
- Ensuring that there is greater consistency in monitoring and evaluation.
- The quality of resources and accommodation.

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

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

The school was last inspected in 1995 and improvement has been satisfactory. Teaching has improved. Standards have risen generally, although there is still some inconsistent progress. Better resources for information and communication technology (ICT) exist, reflecting the developments linked to the technology college status, but are not yet consistently used in some subjects. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements. Students' individual education plans have improved but there are still shortcomings. There are now good procedures for assessment. There have been some improvements to accommodation but issues still exist. Recent initiatives to improve the overall approach to management are good and show the clear potential to initiate further improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	D	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Standards have been maintained close to the national average in the overall performance in GCSE/GNVQ, and in comparison with similar schools. A significant number of students achieve better results than would be expected for their prior attainment. The trend for improvement over the last four years is in line with the national trend. Results in the year 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were close to the national average in mathematics and science and just below in English. Taken together, results in the core subjects were in line with the average, although the overall trend for improvement was below the national trend. For students currently in school, standards are by the age of 16 are above average in music and the humanities but are below average in mathematics, modern foreign languages and elements of design and technology and ICT. The progress achieved by students with special educational needs is broadly satisfactory and those with hearing impairment make good progress. Estimated grades for this year's tests and examinations indicate that results will be higher than in year 2000.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. The majority of students enjoy school and have good attitudes towards their work and teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Many students behave well and understand the difference between right and wrong, but there is a minority that do not behave sensibly.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Many students enjoy good relationships with teachers and each other, but a minority experience difficulty in maintaining good relationships.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory overall, being broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average.

Many students show respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs, value the system of rewards and recognise the need for sanctions. Standards in most lessons are good, but in a minority of lessons, and around the school, shortcomings in attitudes and behaviour can disrupt learning.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged 16-18 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	N/A

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



The quality of teaching has been improved since the previous inspection, when 18 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. It is at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons, is good in 51 per cent of lessons, very good in 23 per cent of lessons, and in 5 per cent is excellent. In Key Stage 4, lessons could not be seen in Year 11 because students were on study leave. The teaching of English and science is good, overall, and in mathematics it is satisfactory. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is broadly satisfactory but in subjects across the curriculum the teaching of information and communication technology is inconsistent. The teaching of students with special educational needs is broadly satisfactory and is good for those with hearing impairment. Work scrutiny shows that, over time, the quality of challenge and setting of work to meet the differing needs of all students is inconsistent.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is breadth and balance and plans exist to modify arrangements at Key Stage 4 to meet the needs of all students. Extra curricular activities are very good.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Provision is unsatisfactory because monitoring and evaluation is underdeveloped and individual education plans lack sufficient focus.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. This minority of students make good progress and achieve similar standards to other students.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory, overall. There are good aspects in the moral, social and cultural development. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.
How well the school cares for its students	Satisfactory. Staff know and care about their students, but aspects of academic assessment and the monitoring of students' personal development are inconsistently applied.

Good structures exist for students' pastoral support. The curriculum includes opportunities for gifted and talented students. The progress of students with special educational needs is satisfactory but the shortcomings in provision place limitations on the quality of support.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The new headteacher is providing clear direction for the school and is initiating good structures for improvement. The range and quality of monitoring and evaluation is inconsistent.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive of the school, but not all statutory responsibilities are fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Test results and national data are well analysed and used. Targets set are not sufficiently monitored and evaluated to maintain progress and to support the raising of standards.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are generally effectively used and the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

The new headteacher provides very good leadership and strategic management. He has established a good professional partnership with governors and the leadership team. The reorganisation of school management and governance to improve planning and monitoring is good. There are some limitations in staffing expertise and because of national recruitment difficulties a significant amount of supply teaching takes place. The quality of accommodation and resources adversely affect standards. There is insufficient accommodation to meet the needs of the school with a significant amount of teaching taking place in temporary accommodation spread out across the site. There are shortages in resources for art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages and music.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The progress being achieved by the majority of students.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations.</li> <li>• It helps students to become mature and responsible, and the majority of students are well-behaved.</li> <li>• How well the school cares for its students.</li> <li>• The good quality of teaching.</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• That they feel able to approach the school with questions or problems.</li> <li>• That the school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The arrangements for homework.</li> <li>• The information on their children's progress.</li> <li>• Support for students with special educational needs.</li> <li>• A minority of students underachieve.</li> </ul>

Only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and about 20 per cent returned the questionnaire. Inspection evidence generally supports all of the points that please parents and carers most. Inspectors find that there is an inconsistency in the setting of homework and that there is room for improvement in the quality of reporting. Inspection evidence supports parents' views in that individual education plans for students with special educational needs are unsatisfactory in content and use by teachers.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The profile of prior attainment of the students who entered Year 7 this academic year contains a significant proportion of students who did not achieve the national average for their ages, in their Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests. The proportion of the students identified as having special educational needs is above average.
2. Results in the year 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, when students are aged 14, were in line with the national average in English and mathematics but below in science. When compared to similar schools, the results in these subjects were below average for English and mathematics and well below for science. Students' average points scores for year 2000 were below the national average in all three subjects. The proportion of students gaining the higher levels was below average. Taken over the last four years, the average points score achieved by the students fluctuated. The targets set by the school for the percentage of students achieving the expected levels have been broadly achieved but the trend for improvement has been below the national levels.
3. Results in GCSE/GNVQ examinations for 5 passes at A\*-C in 2000 were close to the national average and 5 A\*-G grades were above average. In comparison with similar schools based on free school meals, results were average. A significant minority of students are achieving better than would be expected for their prior attainment. The average points score per student was close to the national average in comparison with similar schools and the trend for improvement is close to the national trend. Estimated grades for this year's tests and examinations indicate that results will be higher than in year 2000.
4. Limitations were placed on the opportunity to judge standards for the students currently in school at the end of Key Stage 4 because of students being on study release for their GCSE examinations. No teaching could be seen in Year 11, although a small group of students met with inspectors and discussed their work. Standards for students currently attending the school are in line with expectations in English and science by the end of both key stages but in mathematics, whilst they are in line with the average by the end of Key Stage 3, they are below by the end of Key Stage 4. The best attainment is found in the humanities faculty, where standards in geography, history and religious education are above average in both key stages. Similarly in music, standards are above average. Standards in physical education and in design and technology are in line with the average throughout the school. In the latter subject there is variation, as standards are higher in food technology and textiles than in resistant materials and graphics, where standards are below average. Standards in art are below average at Key Stage 3 but average in Key Stage 4. Standards in modern foreign languages are below average overall. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average in Year 7 but when the subject is taught across all subjects in other year groups standards are below average. Whilst a significant majority of students achieve better standards than would be expected for their prior attainment, there are a minority who underachieve, reflecting their attitudes and the fact that teachers' expectations are not always high enough.
5. Overall, students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, make satisfactory progress and some achieve success in GCSE examinations. Twelve students who took examinations in 2000 were receiving support from the curriculum support department and nine of them obtained 5+ A-G grades. This is a satisfactory reflection of the additional support students receive in class and when they are withdrawn to the curriculum support departments for additional support. Hearing-impaired students make good progress given their levels of achievement on entry. Gifted and talented students are given effective support through a range of initiatives within school and through links with other local educational institutions.
6. There is insufficient development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. Draft whole school plans have been drawn up and have yet to be fully implemented. This limits

students' overall progress. Whilst standards of literacy are being effectively developed in English, the quality of speaking and listening varies greatly and is overall satisfactory. Some departments, such as history, geography and religious education have already responded actively to raise standards by encouraging students to read aloud and discuss their work in groups. Other subject areas do not encourage discussion of ideas as an essential means of clarifying and consolidating learning. The standard of reading comprehension of the great majority of students is adequate for them to understand their textbooks and other printed materials. In science, music and the humanities, key words are effectively displayed and used. However opportunities are missed to develop students' comprehension. The general standard of written work varies widely and is broadly satisfactory. There is good extended writing in history, geography and religious education as well as in textiles, making good use of writing frames to help students to structure their answers.

7. In mathematics lessons students' mental arithmetic skills are satisfactory and are developed through the use of problem solving techniques at the commencement of lessons in line with the national strategy. The majority of departmental schemes of work do not identify opportunities for the development of numerical skills and there is very little evidence of good practice. It is seen in geography and religious education where the results of survey work are represented using statistical diagrams such as pie charts and bar graphs. In science and design and technology lessons students make use of measurement, formulae and graphical representation.
8. Computers are used to good effect in history, modern foreign languages and science departments but there is insufficient consistency in all subjects to make a significant contribution to developing students' skills in the use of computers. This is because there is insufficient planning and co-ordination.

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

9. Overall, students' attitudes to school and their standards of behaviour are satisfactory. They are best in lessons in the humanities and music and improve slightly as students mature. Students show satisfactory initiative and personal responsibility and relationships in the school are generally good. In most lessons, students in both key stages have positive attitudes. They are well motivated by teachers who make the lessons interesting and students are keen to learn. They respond well to challenging tasks, as seen in a Year 10 English lesson and in a Year 8 history lesson involving research. A small minority do not display such positive attitudes and their learning is adversely affected.
10. Overall, standards of behaviour are satisfactory. Behaviour in and around the school for the large majority of students is generally good. In many lessons, behaviour is good and in some very good, especially when lessons are conducted at a good pace and the work is interesting and challenging. Nevertheless, there is some misbehaviour in a minority of lessons, particularly in music, mathematics and art. In these lessons, a minority of students are inattentive, off-task and disrupt the lesson for others. Often, but not always, this was a direct result of inadequate class control by the teachers, some of whom are employed on supply to take the place of permanent teachers. There is a significant amount of litter, especially after break and lunchtimes, but few signs of graffiti. Students and parents report incidents of bullying, but they are generally effectively dealt with. Students are excluded for fixed periods for anti-social behaviour. Three boys have been permanently excluded from the school in the last year. There is no evidence of racial oppression.
11. Most students understand the impact of their actions on others. Most students usually show respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs, in their response to an assembly given by a visiting speaker on the theme of service to one another. Most students value the system of rewards and recognise the need for sanctions.
12. Relationships in the school are generally good, especially between students and teachers. A minority of students do experience difficulty in maintaining good relationships. Personal development of all students is satisfactory. Formal interaction between year groups is limited except in the extra-curricular activities, which involve students of all ages working, playing and

performing together. Participation in extra-curricular activities is good, particularly in music and sport. Students are keen to represent the school in these activities

13. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Authorised absences include a number of family holidays taken during term-time that affect learning. Students with long-term health problems are well supported by the school. A small number of students have unsatisfactory attendance records although the rate of unauthorised absence is well below the national average. About 50 students in the school have attended all sessions during the school year. The punctuality of most students is satisfactory, both at the start of the day and to individual lessons.
14. Overall, many students benefit from their positive attitudes, good behaviour and attendance and have good standards of personal development. There are a significant minority who do not conform to expectations and are undermining the overall ethos of the school.

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

15. The quality of teaching shows significant improvement from that reported at the last inspection. This overall improvement is having a positive effect on many students' attitudes and progress although the effect of this improvement has yet to be fully realised. During this inspection no observations of Year 11 lessons could be made because students were on GCSE study leave. On the basis of inspection evidence, teaching is now good throughout the school. It is at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons, is good in 51 per cent of lessons, very good in 23 per cent of lessons, and in 5 per cent is excellent. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching, 5 per cent, is much less than at the time of the last inspection and there is now more good or better teaching. Teaching is good at both key stages.
16. Teaching is good overall in English, the humanities, music and physical education and occasionally outstanding. Whilst good teaching occurs in most other subjects, a minority of lessons with shortcomings occur in art, design and technology and music. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall but it lacks consistency and this affects the raising of standards. ICT is well taught in the specific lessons in Year 7, but as a cross-curricular subject it is inconsistent.
17. Where teaching is very good or excellent, teachers have high expectations for behaviour, set work that makes very good demands of students and use strategies that engage, interest and motivate students. For example, in a science lesson on photosynthesis the combination of teaching skills led to students making very good progress. Students in Year 8 enjoyed the stimulus of using computers in a history lesson to research information and in Year 9 to produce a 'PowerPoint' computer program to create group presentations. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge underpins very good and excellent teaching.
18. Almost all lessons are well planned to achieve clear learning objectives. In the best lessons, teachers use good questioning techniques at the outset to review previous learning. The use of challenging questions to encourage students to focus on the key learning points leads to well balanced lessons in which students acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, as for example in a good mathematics lesson in Year 7 on triangle numbers and extending sequences. Good use is made of resources to enhance students' learning, as in a Year 10 religious education lesson on gender differences, where the strategic use of a video in conjunction with well-thought out work sheets enabled good discussion. The work set meets the differing needs of the students. Lessons conclude by effective use of a summary session so that teachers and students can review their learning. In lessons in which students make only satisfactory gains in knowledge or understanding, or progress is unsatisfactory, teachers are not using questions to probe and extend learning.
19. Teachers' classroom management and control is generally good. In most lessons there are good relationships between students and with the teachers and support staff. These help to create a good working ethos and contribute to good learning. In some lessons, the attitudes of a significant minority of students are unsatisfactory and the progress of the majority is affected, as teachers have to devote time to managing the behaviour. The lack of effective behaviour

management skills is a weakness in some lessons and undermines the learning. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when some bad behaviour goes unchallenged and a minority of students do not stay on task, as for example in a minority of lessons in Year 8 and also in art and mathematics lessons. It is also brought about when supply staff have to be used and they are not always well supported. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when the work set does not meet the differing needs of the students. Teachers' expectations are inappropriate and students make unsatisfactory progress and underachieve.

20. Whilst there is some good practice in the use of assessment procedures to inform lesson planning and for the setting of targets, for example, in English and the humanities, there is inconsistent practice. Marking is also inconsistent and varies from a cursory tick to very high quality marking which shows students how they might improve their work. Similarly the setting of homework varies. It is often good and extends students' learning but the regularity varies between subject teachers. This reflects the overall lack of monitoring.
21. Students with special educational needs in Key Stage 3 achieve well when they are taught in small groups in the support base. Lessons are characterised by very good relationships and this gives students the confidence to attempt work with a good understanding of their own learning. A group of twelve-year olds made good progress in developing their literacy skills because the text had been well chosen to match their age, needs and interest. The teacher's good lesson planning and preparation and use of high quality questioning, built systematically on students' previous learning and a range of strategies encouraged group and individual work. Inspection evidence shows that students in the curriculum support base achieve satisfactorily and those in the hearing impairment resource base achieve well. However, the potential impact of the independent learning system in the hearing impairment resource base is restricted because students do not use it on a consistent and regular basis. Teaching is satisfactory when they are withdrawn for specialist, targeted language work. It is sometimes undermined because planning, use of time and record keeping are not always adequate.
22. Students with hearing impairment are well supported in mainstream classes and sometimes the quality of support is very good and so they make good progress. The support for students with special educational needs is inconsistent. There is an effective partnership between teachers and learning support assistants. Students' progress is well supported, but not all teachers involve the staff in planning. Good practice supports students' progress in geography, music, English and in design and technology because teachers are aware of students' individual education plans and have high expectations. In science and mathematics, links are unsatisfactory because there is insufficient co-ordination for planning, resulting in activities and materials being inappropriate to the needs of individual students.

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

23. The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory and the appropriate statutory curriculum is in place. However there are shortcomings in the breadth and balance of the curriculum in Key Stage 3, students study all of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Drama is also taught to all students, and dance is available for girls through physical education, but not for boys. Information communication technology is taught as a discrete subject only in Year 7 and in other year groups as a cross-curricular subject. Provision is variable. Draft whole school plans have been drawn up for literacy and numeracy but have yet to be implemented. This limits students' overall opportunities. Plans are being implemented to remedy the shortcomings for ICT in keeping with the school's Technology College status.
24. In Key Stage 4, students are offered a good range of GCSE and GNVQ subjects, with the latter being often taught alongside the GCSE courses as an alternative accreditation. Information and communication technology is examined by a key skills course and a half course GCSE, with more developments planned for next year. The curriculum includes provision for gifted and talented students. In science there is a good connection with a local college which enables the science students of highest prior attainment to study all three

sciences. There are support classes for mathematics and summer schools within the local area.

25. Equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum is satisfactory. A new policy, which takes a wide view of inclusion, has been drafted and is awaiting governors' approval. There are only a very small number of students for whom English is an additional language and the support for these students enables them to have access to the full curriculum. Hearing-impaired students are very well integrated and have access to the full National Curriculum at both key stages provided they have not been disapplied from studying a modern foreign language. There is satisfactory curricular provision in both key stages for meeting the overall needs of students with special educational needs. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum support group option offered to selected students in Years 10 and 11 does not have a clear enough focus on developing a range of identified skills. The lack of alternatives to GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 and the absence of a fully developed work related curriculum have an adverse effect on the relevance and breadth of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. There are some minor inequalities in provision of sports and in the time allocation for boys' and girls' games in Years 10 and 11. There is access to extra-curricular sports and other activities for all students, whether they are skilled in the activity or not. The students are made aware of the wider multi-ethnic society outside the school through work in areas such as personal and social education, geography, history and religious education.
26. Little advantage has been taken to make use of the opportunity to disapply some students from parts of the National Curriculum to provide more relevant opportunities which meet their needs. The further development of a work-related curriculum is being given a high priority. Timetabling arrangements lead to some shortcomings in students' learning experiences. The distribution of lessons within the two-week timetable and the allocation of more than one teacher to a class creates problems for continuity of teaching and the progression of learning. This occurs in a range of subjects including English and science.
27. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There are many after school activities, particularly in music and physical education. Activities also include contributions from the humanities department for fieldwork, from modern foreign languages for exchanges and journeys abroad and the school camp for students in Key Stage 3. Art and science provide chances to extend students' enthusiasm for their subject through a variety of clubs and societies.
28. Overall, registration is not well used. There are examples of good use of time through structured activities and discussions but there is too much inconsistency. The school has recognised that insufficient continuity occurs to build on students' previous experience in primary schools in literacy, numeracy and ICT. It plans to reinforce work undertaken in school by coordinators and for tutors to monitor the progress.
29. The school is to appoint a coordinator of excellence in the community to consolidate its good connections with its community and relationships with partner institutions. Links with feeder schools are satisfactory and the recent decision to appoint a permanent head of Year 7 is designed to develop these links. Good links exist with the local business community for elements of work experience and resources.
30. Provision for personal and social education is good. It is well taught by a team of specialist staff who have good subject expertise. It covers a wide range of relevant areas including sex, alcohol and drug education, as well as relationships and guidance. Students are prepared well for work and for life beyond school. All students in Key Stage 4 participate in a work experience programme. They formally record their experience and an audit of their key skills, for which they receive a certificate. Careers education is good, providing effective guidance for continuing education, training and employment. The number of students continuing their education is high.
31. Good provision is made for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, overall. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met, either in assemblies or in from periods. There is inadequate

time for reflection. Assemblies make good use of visitors, particularly from the local Christian community, who relate well with students. A church-based youth worker regularly supports the mentoring process and contributes to lessons in religious education and personal and social education, as well as the Christian Union. There is a good contribution from subjects, such as English, art, music and history, towards developing students' values and beliefs, moral development and awe and wonder. Science lessons consider the origins of man and the universe, the role of God and the creation of energy. Religious education makes a very good contribution, through its emphasis in learning from, as well as about, religions. The emotional side of life is recognised in all humanities lessons, where background music is often used to create a positive ethos.

32. There is good provision for moral development. Moral issues arise in sciences and the humanities. For example, issues such as genetic engineering, the use of nuclear power, care for the environment or the causes of the Holocaust are covered. Positive attitudes to members of other races are encouraged in modern foreign languages and much of the material used in English and drama has strong moral implications. Good behaviour is promoted in many lessons and students are taught to respect school property, adults and their fellow students.
33. Provision for social development is good. Social issues feature strongly in English, drama and the humanities. Many subjects make good use of group work. Teamwork is promoted well in physical education. There are many good opportunities for extra-curricular activities which support social development. Opportunities also exist for responsibilities and leadership roles to be undertaken in school.
34. Provision for cultural development overall, through curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, is good. The overseas visits contribute to the provision for cultural development, as does work in modern foreign languages generally. Western culture is well provided for in art, music and literature lessons. The life styles of other cultures are considered in the context of geography and religion as well as historically; and through inventions in science and in food technology. Wall displays in the humanities area make a particularly good contribution to this aspect.

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

35. There is satisfactory provision for the care of students. The lack of consistent measuring and monitoring of their achievement and progress was a key issue at the time of the last inspection and good progress has been made.
36. The procedures for subject-based assessment are good, but they are not applied consistently, for example to plan or amend work in lessons or the subject curriculum. In the best practice, students' attainment and progress are assessed and monitored regularly. They are set targets, based on their prior attainment, and parents and students are made aware of the targets, which are minimum not maximum targets. The targets are set to be reviewed annually and more often in the case of students who are realising their targets to maintain the challenge. Detailed records are kept and, where practice is good, students have a clear picture of where they need to focus their efforts in order to improve their standards of attainment. Assessment procedures are very good in English, humanities and music but are unsatisfactory in mathematics, science and for whole school ICT. The quality of marking is very good in English, good in design and technology and humanities, but in other subjects the marking is inadequate. It does not show students how they might improve or set sufficiently clear targets. The data is not used effectively enough, and the last inspection identified weaknesses for self-assessment by students. Approaches to developing students' skills in self-assessment are now included in the draft learning policy.
37. There is broadly satisfactory provision for meeting the overall needs of students with special educational needs, although there are shortcomings. Staff in the learning support department and hearing impairment resource base know their students well and have a good understanding of their wide range of needs. All students are assessed upon entry to the school and the data is used to identify students for additional literacy support. However, the Key Stage 3 curriculum support department is insufficiently staffed to provide for the needs of all students. Procedures are unsatisfactory for monitoring the students' achievements and



progress in mainstream lessons or within the learning support department. This limits the opportunities and information for the curriculum support staff who will be providing 1:1 or group support. The hearing-impaired resource base has an effective system of log sheets that are used to record this information and these provide an ongoing record of students' achievements.

38. Procedures for annual reviews are unsatisfactory. Reviews are carried out but individual education plans are not always shared with parents. The overall quality of the targets has shortcomings. There is no coherent link between the targets set at an annual review, the individual education plan and the formal review of targets at the subsequent annual review. These targets are not accurately reflected in individual education plans. These criticisms also apply to plans for students who have emotional and behavioural difficulty action plans.
39. The annual reporting of students' attainment and progress to parents, identified as a weakness at the last inspection, has improved. There is now shorter gap between reports in Years 8 and 9 and subject-specific targets are set. There are still some reports for students in Years 7 to 9 where teachers combine the comment on geography, history and religious education and do not give separate comments, as is the requirement. In some subjects the comments do not give adequate subject-specific comments on attainment.
40. Overall the school's monitoring of academic performance and personal development, and the educational and personal support and guidance available to students are satisfactory. Many teachers know students well and offer good personal support and guidance. Advice on careers and making lifestyle choices is good. Staff have a wide range of data available to them which is not always used with full rigour and effectiveness to set targets for improvement to raise standards. Pastoral care is generally good, although the role of the form tutor is not fully established to best effect in all year groups. The best tutor sessions provide a purposeful and thoughtful start to the school day, but others are little more than social gatherings.
41. There are very good, established procedures to identify and handle issues related to child protection. Satisfactory procedures are in place for health and safety although the formal aspect of written assessments of the risks associated with work in each department are not consistently made and some problems exist, especially in the design and technology faculty. Routine checks are conducted at appropriate intervals to ensure the safe operation of electrical, fire prevention and other equipment. Clear guidelines are established to deal with first aid and minor emergencies.
42. Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good. Registration, at the start of morning and afternoon, as well as for all lessons, is very well organised. Reasons for absence are always sought and contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for students identified as being at risk. Outside agencies, such as the educational welfare officer, are used effectively. Senior staff and tutors are provided with regular attendance data, but there is some inconsistency in their effective use to further raise overall attendance levels.
43. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. The behaviour policy is used well by established members of staff but new staff and supply teachers do not always use it to such good effect. Generally the systems of rewards and sanctions are used appropriately, which students appreciate. A minority of students, mainly in Year 9, have been helped to integrate with mainstream school by the introduction of the Behaviour Support Base. The introduction of initiatives such as the "Student of the Month" has prevented the majority becoming disenchanted. Alternative learning packages have been successfully introduced to overcome disaffection in a few students in Key Stage 4.
44. Since the last inspection effective pastoral care has been maintained. Some health and safety issues still require attention. They are related to resources and accommodation and are listed later in this report. Improvements in the collection of data on academic progress and personal development have been made but this data is not yet used to full effect.

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

45. Parents have a broadly satisfactory view of the school, although only a minority of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and attended the meeting. Most parents feel that the school has appropriate expectations for their children to work hard and achieve their best. Parents said they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. The majority said that their children like school and make good progress with their work and in becoming more mature. They like the range of activities outside lessons. Concerns were expressed by some parents with regard to behaviour and the fact that homework is not consistently set and especially in Year 8, is often not set at all. Parents feel that the school does not work closely in partnership with them and take sufficient notice of their views. Some are not sufficiently well informed about how their child is getting on, particularly for students who have special educational needs. Concern was expressed about the attitudes and behaviour of some students.
46. The inspectors broadly agree with the views expressed by parents. In particular they support their concerns about behaviour. Parents' views on the inconsistency of homework are endorsed, although there is some good practice where the activities clearly extend students' learning. Information overall is very good, but detailed annual progress reports are unsatisfactory. There are satisfactory opportunities to meet teachers. Parents have been asked for their opinions about the school in written questionnaires and in meetings, such as that held before the decision to amend the school day.
47. Overall the school has effective links with parents. Appropriate information is provided and parents are willing to visit the school if there are concerns or problems. Parents' involvement has a positive impact on the work of the school. The governing body has its full allocation of parent governors. Parents attend productions and meetings arranged for them.
48. Overall the quality of information provided to parents is satisfactory. Many documents are informative and well produced, although the prospectus and the governors' annual report do not include all details required by law. Parents receive lively, termly newsletters providing information of events in school. Consultation evenings are offered and parents who do not attend are contacted so that they may collect a written review of their child's progress. Home-school agreements have been established and parents are provided with their own copy of the school rules before they sign. A web-site is maintained which links to feeder primary sites and general education pages and provides some general information about the school of interest to prospective parents; however this does not include examination results or extend to a school calendar of events or recent news items about the school.
49. Parents' involvement in the work of the school and their contribution to learning at school and at home are satisfactory. They attend performances in which their children are involved and support sports fixtures. Parents respond well to school requests to discuss their children. A few parents are directly involved in the Priory School Association and support its fund-raising efforts through monthly car boot sales. Planners are sometimes used as an effective communications medium between parents and teachers but this is not consistent throughout the school. The quality of the school's partnership with parents has not altered significantly since the last inspection.

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

50. The school's aims seek to develop 'Lifelong Learning' and are being satisfactorily met. There is recognition by the governors and headteacher that improvements in provision are needed to ensure that all students develop their potential. The links with the community education programme are good and the aims are well met.
51. Governors operate effectively and are developing their role in a professional partnership with the headteacher. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and have set in action training and development programmes to extend their skills in the monitoring of the standards and quality of education. There are monitoring groups for

development planning and priorities and a Strategic Direction Group. Governors are committed and are giving good support. Most statutory responsibilities are met, except in relation to a daily act of collective worship for all students, in recording health and safety details and for the quality of information in school publications.

52. The school is being very well led and managed. The headteacher, who has been in post since the beginning of this academic year, has initiated a range of changes that are shaping the educational direction of the school. He has a very clear vision for school improvement, which is well shared with members of the leadership team and governors. This is particularly so in relation to the technology college status. Plans for the reorganisation of the leadership team's responsibilities are in place, although they are hampered by the long-term sickness of a deputy headteacher whose skills are highly valued and who shares the same vision as the headteacher. Her duties are currently delegated to other senior staff.
53. Within the overall management of the school there are inconsistencies, particularly in the procedures for monitoring and evaluation. Whilst there is good practice, the links between members of the leadership team and heads of department and faculties are not rigorously adhered to and within some departments and faculties there are differences in management practices. For example, not all staff with management responsibilities ensure that there is regular monitoring of teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice. The use of assessment procedures and the interpretation of data to support the analysis, vary and this has an adverse effect on implementing the strategies for improvement. This shortcoming is also apparent within the pastoral structures whereby tutorial time is not always well used or monitored.
54. The school has recognised that there needs to be clearer management for the teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Draft policies exist and structures are being effectively developed for their implementation so that the management and co-ordination across the curriculum is appropriate. The overall management of the provision for students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. There is good liaison with primary schools and the curriculum support department has produced a particularly effective handbook for learning support assistants. The practice of sharing the responsibility for students with special educational needs between separate key stage co-coordinators has not proved effective. The whole school special educational needs co-coordinator is not able to maintain an overview of the total provision and this is reflected in the inconsistency in the liaison between faculty staff and curriculum support staff. This leads to deficiencies in individual education plans, behaviour plans and continuity in learning. There has been unsatisfactory improvement in curriculum support for students with special educational needs since the previous inspection. There has been satisfactory improvement in the provision for hearing-impaired students, who continue to make good progress, but staffing is very stretched to maintain effective support.
55. The strategic plan inherited by the headteacher lists the priorities but there is inadequate detail in action plans to show how the plan would be achieved. Current planning is much improved and the priorities show awareness of the school's needs. They include achievement, partnership, effectiveness and quality, resource development and enterprise. More effective rigour is being introduced into financial planning although the overall amount of funding available to the school is lower than average. The recommendations from the most recent auditors' report have been addressed.
56. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Good progress has been made in procedures for assessment. Setting work to meet the differing needs of the students still has shortcomings. National Curriculum requirements are now met. Health and safety issues still remain, as do the statutory issues for collective worship and school publications. It is in recent months that the overall management has begun to influence the overall satisfactory standards in the school and to generate an increased level of pace. Overall, in terms of its level of expenditure, the standards being achieved and the quality of education provided, the school provides satisfactory value for money.
57. The match of teachers and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory, overall. The staff have a good balance of experience and expertise. In line with the national

situation the school experiences some problems in the recruitment and retention of staff. The Key Stage 3 and 4 curriculum support bases are located and managed separately. The hearing impairment resource base is staffed by one qualified teacher of the deaf. The support staff provide an effective role in supporting students in both mainstream classes and in the resource bases, although occasionally they are not used to full effect by class teachers and their role is not fully reflected in teacher planning. Staff development is satisfactory but there has not been sufficient thoroughness in ensuring that the experience gained by staff is shared and measured for its impact on whole school activities. Administrative support is sufficient to meet the school's needs and these staff make a very good contribution to the smooth running of the school, as do the maintenance staff.

58. Accommodation is broadly satisfactory to meet the needs of the curriculum but there are significant deficiencies in music, and in design and technology. There is insufficient space for the number of students on roll and with the intended increase this will pose a significant problem. Accommodation in design and technology is a health and safety risk. Music has to be taught on the stage, which limits the use of resources. The Key Stage 4 curriculum support base can only be reached by passing through another classroom and both this base and the hearing impairment resource base are too small to accommodate the students and this situation adversely affects teaching and learning. There are a large number of temporary classrooms that are located in one main area, yet give rise to problems for resources and students' punctuality for lessons. Very good use is made of all the facilities. The exterior fabric of some of the buildings gives rise to concern. Overall, resources are unsatisfactory, although those which exist are used well to support students' learning. The library provides valuable non-fiction resource materials and resources, as well as access to CD ROM and computer work. There are shortages in art, history, geography, music, modern foreign languages and in design and technology, where the state of some tools poses a health and safety risk. The ratio of students to computers at 8:1 is satisfactory although there is inadequate use of computers to support learning in subjects across the curriculum. The use of newer technology is underdeveloped.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff now need to:

Further improve the consistency of practices across departments through more rigorous monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle managers to raise the standards of attainment by:

- increasing the proportion of students achieving the national average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 and for 5 A\*-G passes at GCSE;  
(Paragraphs 2, 4, 59, 60, 68, 77, 84, 90, 92, 125)
- improving the opportunities for the development of students' literacy, numeracy and use of computers in subjects across the curriculum;  
(Paragraphs 6, 7, 8, 16, 23, 54, 62, 82, 89, 94, 109, 119, 124, 126, 150)
- improving the provision for students with special educational needs, especially the quality and use of individual education plans;  
(Paragraphs 21, 22, 37, 38, 54, 70)
- improving marking and the use of assessment to ensure that it is more consistently used to support planning and the setting of whole school, departmental and individual student targets so that work meets students' differing needs;  
(Paragraphs 10, 36, 43, 44, 53, 89, 99, 144)
- improving the consistency across the school for the reviewing of student performance; and  
(Paragraphs 20, 36, 74, 76, 81, 83, 144)
- improving the resources and accommodation.  
(Paragraphs 58, 100, 101, 110, 117, 132, 138)

Other issues which require consideration are:

- the better use of tutorial time to address issues relating to progress and personal development (paragraphs 28 and 40);
- formal recording of risk assessments (paragraphs 41 and 51); and
- meeting the statutory requirements for collective worship, the school prospectus, the annual report to parents from the governors and students' reports (paragraphs 31, 39, 48, 51).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	137
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	23	51	16	4	1	0

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

### Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	996	N/A
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	99	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	52	N/A
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	249	N/A

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	54
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	60

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.7
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	102	85

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	70	59
	Girls	70	55	47
	Total	127	125	106
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (58)	67 (55)	57 (52)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (11)	41 (23)	19 (16)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	75	58
	Girls	71	66	56
	Total	148	141	114
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (39)	76 (52)	62 (61)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (15)	35 (27)	22 (24)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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
	2000	99	95	194

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	41	91	94
	Girls	51	91	93
	Total	92	182	187
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	47 (33)	94 (94)	96 (98)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39
	National	38.4

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	21
	National	



### **Ethnic background of students**

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	2
White	979
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	58	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55.1
Number of students per qualified teacher	18.1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7– Y11**

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	635

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	69.2
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size:**

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	27.7
Key Stage 4	23.4

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999/2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	2516290
Total expenditure	2492690
Expenditure per pupil	2483
Balance brought forward from previous year	38900
Balance carried forward to next year	62500

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	996
Number of questionnaires returned	53

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	15	66	15	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	21	62	11	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	8	43	30	2	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	8	42	36	15	0
The teaching is good.	2	75	11	2	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	9	57	21	11	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	26	57	9	6	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	21	64	13	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	8	45	28	9	6
The school is well led and managed.	15	43	11	6	25
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	17	62	13	2	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	51	13	0	13

**Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

Only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and about 20 per cent returned the questionnaire. Inspection evidence generally supports all of the points that please parents and carers most. Inspectors find that there is an inconsistency in the setting of homework and that there is room for improvement in the quality of reporting. Inspection evidence supports parents' views in that individual education plans for students with special educational needs are unsatisfactory in content and use by teachers.

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

### ENGLISH

59. Students' overall standard of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, is in line with that found nationally. In National Curriculum tests in 2000 the percentage of students reaching national expectations was above average, whereas the percentage reaching the higher levels was below average. Girls do marginally better than boys when compared with their respective national averages. Although results are in line with national benchmarks, when compared with schools in similar contexts they are somewhat below average. Over recent years there has been a general trend of improvement. Students' levels of literacy on entry are below average and overall there is good progress by the age of 14.
60. In the GCSE for English language in 2000 the percentage of students who achieved grades A\*-C was just below the national average. Results in English literature were below the national average. In both subjects boys did better than girls compared with their own national average. Students do better in English than they do in most other subjects. Performance has improved steadily over recent years. GCSE results in drama in 2000 were below the national average, although boys' results were above their national average.
61. Standards by the age of 14 are in line with the level expected nationally. Students with special educational needs make good progress in their basic literacy skills up to the age of 14 as a result of good specialist support. The highest attaining students in all years are fully challenged, especially through vigorous questioning and high expectation. Thus they are achieving better than their previous test performance. At the age of 16, students' work is close to levels found nationally. The standard of students in Year 10 is above that found nationally because good teaching, from the same teachers throughout the year, is achieving good motivation in students.
62. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of oral work since the last inspection. The standard of speaking is now higher than that commonly found. Students generally listen attentively and work effectively in pairs and small groups. By the age of 14 the great majority of students use the spoken form of Standard English. They answer questions clearly and fluently. For example, high attaining students in Year 10 spoke articulately about themes of good and evil in *Macbeth* and showed maturity and sensitivity in their critical judgments. A few low attaining students in Year 7 fail to present their prepared talks clearly, reading rather than speaking. When talking to adults, the majority of students are courteous and confident. In other subjects across the curriculum, the quality of speaking and listening varies greatly. A draft document upon language across the curriculum has been circulated but it does not, as yet, form a whole-school policy. Some departments, such as history, geography and religious education have already responded actively. In geography students are encouraged to read aloud and discuss their work in groups. Talk is assumed to be an important way of learning in history and religious education. Other subject areas do not encourage discussion of ideas as an essential means of clarifying and consolidating learning.
63. Overall attainment in reading is close to that expected nationally. The majority of students read well enough to understand and enjoy the wide range of literature that they encounter. By the age of 14 students read more widely than they did at the time of the last inspection. The standard of reading aloud varies greatly but most students read fluently with good variation in pitch and pace. A minority of low attaining students are not fluent or audible and fail to make good sense of a text. Students in Year 8 read their diary entries based upon *Oliver Twist* with clarity and enjoyment. By the age of 14 the great majority of students identify accurately aspects such as character, plot and themes in texts, as well as recognising the importance of the author's use of language. Students in Year 10 understand a wide range of poetic techniques and showed this, for example, in their study of the poems of Simon Armitage. The standard of reading comprehension of the great majority of students in subjects across the curriculum is adequate for them to understand their textbooks and other printed materials. In science, key words are displayed in laboratories and correct vocabulary is emphasised.

Students in Year 9 use technical language accurately in music. In the humanities good use is made of the library as a source of enquiry and research-based learning. In history, for example, good use was made of a poem to illustrate the plight of evacuees during World War 2. Nevertheless, insufficient structures exist to support work in English.

64. The overall standard of written work of 14 year old students is broadly in line with that expected nationally. There are, however, marked variations in standards within the key stage. The written work of high attaining students in Year 9 is lively, imaginative, accurate and carefully presented. Lower attaining students enjoy their writing but make frequent mistakes with technical details, especially sentence structure. They do not always think clearly what they want to write before putting pen to paper. Students write effectively for a range of purposes and readerships. They draft their work carefully and many use word processing effectively for this purpose. The best written work of some high attaining students in Year 10 springs from their study of literature and is carefully planned, skilfully structured and accurately presented. As a result of lively and stimulating teaching, many students actively enjoy writing. No judgements can be reached for Year 11 as they were on study leave. The general standard of written work across the curriculum is not as effective as in specific work for English. There is good extended writing in history, geography, and religious education as well as in textiles. In the humanities, writing frames are used effectively to help students to structure their answers but there is insufficient cohesive planning in all subjects to support the work undertaken in English lessons.
65. The standard of behaviour is, in the main, good. Students generally sustain concentration well and are committed to achieving high standards. They work together well in groups showing patience and awareness of the needs and beliefs of others. In one or two classes, students have found a sequence of supply teachers unsettling and are finding it hard to regain concentration and motivation. In almost all classes in Year 10, behaviour was good and in many it was very good. Students worked with energy and evident enjoyment. A small minority of students studying drama in Year 10 appeared to be disaffected and their behaviour adversely affected the quality of learning of others.
66. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. In Year 10 teaching is always at least good and is frequently excellent. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good. Lessons are very carefully planned and prepared. Students' work is marked conscientiously and consistently and comments are very constructive. Clear and helpful targets are set to help students improve their work. There is ample opportunity for students to engage in self-assessment, which they carry out honestly and rigorously. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods and lessons contain a variety of language activities. The content of lessons is skilfully matched to students' level of attainment and, where appropriate, different tasks are set for students with special educational needs. These students are taught with particular sensitivity and specialist support staff work closely and effectively with class teachers. Relationships within the classroom are almost always positive and purposeful. The high regard students have for staff in the department springs from the confidence they have in the teachers and their understanding of the commitment to high standards. Students know that their views are valued and taken seriously. There has been a dramatic improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. In outstanding lessons, recent learning is revised, tasks are briefly explained, targets are set, pace is brisk and, at the end, learning is consolidated. Most importantly, there is a sense of shared trust.
67. Departmental management is very efficient with very effective planning and organisation. The outstanding leadership, combining energy with clear vision, has initiated significant improvement in teaching and standards. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Drama is closely co-ordinated into departmental policy and most of it is taught by English staff. Many classes in Years 7 and 8 are shared between two teachers and the distribution of lessons during the week is often inappropriate. These shortcomings in the timetable adversely affect continuity and progression in students' learning. The department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school. The standard of assessment and recording of progress is of the highest standard. Staff share the same sense of purpose and concern for high standards. Resources are good and boxes of attractive books in every classroom provide a wide choice of

good quality reading. A well-stocked and attractive fiction section in the library provides added width to students' reading.

## MATHEMATICS

68. Students' results in their end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests indicate that their attainment on entry to the school is broadly in-line with the national average but that a significant minority are below average. In the 2000 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests the proportion of students attaining the expected level for their age of fourteen was close to the national average for all schools but was below average for similar schools. Boys' performance slightly exceeded that of girls. The average points score achieved in mathematics was in line with that in English but better than that for science. At GCSE in 2000 the attainment of both boys and girls was below the national average. Results were lower than those for English and science. Thus the end of key stage test results show that students make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 but the end of Key Stage 4 examination results show that students make unsatisfactory progress in this key stage.
69. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the national average. For example, in a lesson on using the difference method to find a solution of a function, all students in a higher ability set were able to apply their knowledge and find a solution and the majority were able to find the general rule that applied. In a lesson on identities the majority of students in a lower ability group were able successfully to collect like terms. They develop satisfactory skills as they cope with the demands of a suitable variety of tasks in using and applying mathematics. Most students are good at basic arithmetic by the end of the key stage, but a significant minority experience difficulty with simple mathematical operations and rely too heavily upon teachers for guidance. Throughout the key stage students' progress across all the attainment targets is, in most cases, satisfactory. Students generally use correct mathematical language.
70. Inspection evidence, which was limited because Year 11 students were on examination release, shows that standards overall by the end of Key Stage 4, when students are aged 16, are below average. For example, in a lesson on distance-time graphs, students in a lower ability set were asked to complete an exercise without the necessary teacher input to explain the concepts involved. As a result, students were unable to make progress without individual support. Whilst some students within the group achieved a degree of success with the problems, a minority failed to make any progress during the lesson. However, students in a lesson on changing the subject of a formula were eager to succeed and all students in the group made good progress, with the higher attaining students solving the problems independently without assistance from the teacher. A significant minority of average and below average students are slow in recalling and applying basic facts. Overall too many students of all levels of attainment make unsatisfactory progress. This is also the case for students with special educational needs at both key stages.
71. The standards of behaviour are satisfactory overall. They are often better in Key Stage 3, where the majority of students maintain a good level of concentration during lessons and enjoy their work. In some lessons, a minority of students are not dealt with effectively, disrupt the learning of other students and negate the progress of the whole class. For example in a lesson on number patterns two students spent almost the entire lesson chatting and disrupting other students without being effectively challenged by the teacher. Students' attitudes to the subject are generally satisfactory but a minority are unable to sustain concentration throughout the lesson. Where there are particular concerns about a student and his/her progress related to mathematics parents are contacted directly by members of the faculty to discuss the problem.
72. In Key Stage 3 teaching is good and, from a restricted evidence base, is satisfactory in Key Stage 4, overall. In Key Stage 3, teachers' subject knowledge is good; lesson planning is good with clear learning objectives and this is apparent in the way in which they make effective use of question and answer sessions to check and consolidate student understanding. For example, this process occurred in a good lesson in year 7 on triangle numbers and extending sequences. Good teaching occurs when positive behaviour management keeps students on task. In such lessons, relationships are good and students are positively encouraged to sustain

their concentration; praise is used effectively during question and answer sessions enabling students to have the confidence to explore and develop their understanding. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when some bad behaviour goes unchallenged and a minority of students do not stay on task, as for example in a Year 10 lesson on distance-time graphs.

73. In some lessons, expectations of what students can achieve are unsatisfactory and the range of teaching methods limited. Work is not always matched to the needs of individual students, for example, in a Year 7 lesson where the higher attaining students sat passively, talking to their neighbours, unable to make further progress because they had completed all work set. Although students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3, overall the quantity of work produced by the majority of students is somewhat limited and in Key Stage 4 progress becomes unsatisfactory. The marking of students' work is inconsistent and not always in line with faculty policy. For some groups, particularly those affected by staff absence, marking is infrequent and does not indicate how students can improve their performance. Satisfactory use is made of homework, which is set regularly and is used to reinforce learning. Some learning support assistants provide good support within lessons and this has a positive impact on learning. Satisfactory use is made of display to enhance the learning environment but this contains very limited amounts of students' work. The use of ICT is developing and is currently satisfactory.
74. In light of the recent staffing problems, associated with recruitment and long-term absence, faculty leadership is satisfactory. The head of faculty undertakes a satisfactory level of monitoring of teaching and learning. The procedures for the monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory and are being effectively developed. The data acquired from monitoring and evaluation is used to highlight possible underachievement but has not yet been used to identify gifted students. There is insufficient use of data to inform planning. A brief faculty development plan which reflects the whole school priorities has been produced but this does not include specific detail of how the faculty intends to improve teaching and learning and provide work suited to the needs of all students.
75. Resources are very good and accommodation satisfactory. One classroom is separate from the main teaching block. It is less than ideal for teaching purposes and makes monitoring of teaching more difficult and also makes access to faculty resources more problematic for the teacher. Technology college status has enabled a bid to be placed for three laptop computers for use within the faculty. Overhead light wells in some rooms, which do not have blinds, making the use of overhead projectors very difficult.
76. Since the previous inspection standards in both key stages have not changed. The issue of some unsatisfactory lessons at Key Stage 4 where work lacks appropriate challenge and students have a poor attitude to learning has not been sufficiently addressed. Work set is not always suited to the needs of individual students. Although it is addressed in the scheme of work this is not always translated into classroom practice. In-class support is generally effective, but it still lacks coherence. Written targets in students' reports are still too generalised and not sufficiently related to specific mathematical concepts or skills. Resources have now improved and students have access to textbooks for use at home.

## **SCIENCE**

77. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 in year 2000, when they were in Year 9, was just below the national average. There was no difference between the performance of boys and girls. The number of students who gained the higher levels was lower than the national figure. When compared to the other core subjects, boys do better in science than they do in English, but they achieve higher levels in mathematics. Girls, however, do better in both mathematics and English compared to their attainment in science.
78. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with the national average and students make satisfactory progress in the acquisition of knowledge and understanding as they move through Years 7 to 9. Year 7 students can describe the physical properties of the planets and use their scientific knowledge to predict if life was possible on the surface of each. They can also recall that planets travel in elliptical orbits around the sun. In Year 8 lower attaining students know

that sound is measured in decibels and can use specialised data collection equipment to record and display different sounds. These students can also describe the process of conduction and convection of heat energy. Students understand the causes and effects of acid rain. Higher attaining students, by the end of the key stage can plan a scientific investigation to determine how changes in temperature might affect the rate of chemical reaction. Lower attaining students can identify the major bones of the body and explain the various functions of the skeleton.

79. The proportion of students obtaining a GCSE grade of A\*-C is just above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4 most students take double certification with some higher attaining students taking the three separate sciences at GCSE and they achieved results in the A\*-C grades which were above the national average. Boys attain better grades than girls. Standards by the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with expectations. Students in Year 10 can name and describe the formation of the various types of rock and explain how the different cooling times of igneous rock led to different sizes of crystal formation. By the end of the key stage, students can perform all aspects of scientific investigations including design, evaluation and drawing conclusions. Some students do not use their scientific knowledge to predict the outcomes of their investigations effectively.
80. There is a good relationship between the students and staff. Most students, especially the higher attaining students, behave well and work hard. Students in the upper school have the best attitude to the subject. They are keen to enter in to class discussions, have the confidence to answer questions and use their oracy skills constructively. Students work in a safe and enthusiastic manner when performing practical work. A good example of this was in a Year 10 group undertaking an investigation on studying the factors that affect the size of crystal formation in igneous rocks. The motivation and behaviour of a few lower attaining students is, at times, unsatisfactory especially in Years 7 and 8. This poor attitude occurs when classroom control is inadequate, there is insufficient pace and inappropriate tasks are set. Girls in Key Stage 3 and 4, regardless of their attainment, produce work that is complete and well presented. Higher attaining boys have complete notes but a lower standard of presentation. A large number of lower attaining boys show poor attitudes and produce work that is often incomplete and of low quality.
81. Teaching is good, overall. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. In the best lessons, the teaching is well planned and taught by a suitably qualified and experienced staff. In most lessons registers are taken formally and this helps start the lesson in an ordered manner, followed by the teacher describing the aims of the lesson. The lessons have good pace linked with effective class control. For example, the activities in a very effective lesson on photosynthesis in Year 9, included an examination of leaf shape linked to their role, a class discussion on the structure of a leaf, a video microscope view of a leaf and ended with the use of microscope slides for the detailed aspects of leaf components. Homework is structured and is an integral part of the lesson plans but is, in general, not used as a means of reinforcing learning. Where teaching is less effective it reflects the fact that work does not always meet the differing needs of the students. In Year 7 students are taught in mixed ability groups but in other years the teaching arrangements are for sets of students of similar attainment. Teachers are well served by the technical support staff, who are efficient and well organised, ensuring that the equipment and resources ordered are present at the start of lessons.
82. Students make satisfactory progress overall across both key stages. Even when teaching is good and students are aware of their progress from the assessments made on end of topic tests and are informed of their potential level or grades on a regular basis, their attitudes undermine their progress. Students with special educational needs are effectively supported with additional staffing and make satisfactory progress. The potentially higher attaining students in the Key Stage 4 have the opportunity of following all three sciences to GCSE using a very effective link with Weston College. There is a wide range of opportunities throughout the key stages for students to use their literacy and numeracy skills both in written work and class discussions. The use of computers is underdeveloped and easier access to whole class facilities is needed to allow this to increase. There are also insufficient data logging units to enable better group use during lessons.

83. The management of the department is good. The head of department was appointed since the last inspection and has been responsible for the introduction of many new initiatives. These include a review of the courses offered so as to provide a relevant experience for the students and to ensure the department has sufficient resources. These courses have also allowed for an increase in the range of teaching styles and activities of the students and this has helped raise the standard of teaching and learning in the department. The majority of points raised in the previous inspection have been addressed. This includes the introduction of a range of investigation opportunities for the students linked with centrally held records of attainment. The assessment of students' progress and attainment is good but is not used sufficiently to evaluate effectiveness and to plan for developments. The marking of books is not rigorous with little narrative comment on achievement or setting targets. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough and the timetabling and staffing of the mixed ability Year 7 groups limits continuity of teaching and progress. The department recognises that it needs to address these shortcomings to further raise standards.

## ART

84. In the 2000 GCSE art examination the percentage of students gaining \*A to C grades was below the national average percentage. Girls did better than boys. There were no GNVQ art students in 2000, but in recent years when GNVQ art has run alongside GCSE art, the combined scores have raised students' performance to a much closer correlation with national levels.
85. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are below expectations. A strength is the development of students' practical skills, which are good. For example, in Year 9 students can use cutting and construction skills to make complex forms based on graffiti-style lettering and some have learned how to sketch the human figure from observation. Practical skills develop well over the key stage from a fairly low starting point. For example, Year 7 students have to master very basic brush handling and colour mixing skills, with little previous experience, before they can move on to making paintings. Poor behaviour by some students in Year 8 lessons has a detrimental effect on their own and other students' attainment in these classes. In Key Stage 3 the range of work is narrow, there are no opportunities to develop printmaking skills, or to do visual work using computers. Drawing skills are generally underdeveloped and almost all work is on a small scale. These factors have a detrimental effect on attainment by the time that the students are aged 14.
86. Standards seen in Key Stage 4 during the inspection were in line with expectations for the GCSE and GNVQ courses, reflecting the higher prior attainment of the students who have chosen to take the subject to examination level. Practical skills continue to develop well and attainment improves rapidly. Students can work materials, tools and processes to explore and express their own creative and expressive ideas. This results in some powerful, complex and individually expressive imagery, in two and three-dimensional materials. Students can use sketchbooks to research and experiment to develop their work and ideas over extended stages and through a range of alternative approaches, and this is the key to the quality and depth of the finished products.
87. In both key stages students are inspired by the work of other artists and this has a good effect on their work. However, their knowledge and understanding about other artists and styles are weak in Key Stage 3 but improve in Key Stage 4. A good feature of work in Key Stage 4 is the quality of written presentation, as with students often using word processing skills to good effect. They write in an effective manner and style about the evaluation of their own work and about their response to the work of other artists.
88. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall, with a minority of lessons with significant shortcomings and is good in Key Stage 4. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and provide students with plenty of individually adapted support and expertise. Where teaching is good, lessons are enjoyable, well organised, productive and purposeful. Appropriately challenging work is set. Relationships are good and students value the advice they receive. Demonstrations of technique, explanations and exemplifications are clearly given so that students know what to do and how to do it. Work is marked and assessed thoroughly so that



students can understand how well they are progressing. Students respond positively to the good teaching, working hard and behaving well. Shortcomings occur in some lessons in Key Stage 3, when poor behaviour is not well managed and disruption prevents the usually good working atmosphere developing. Most of the misbehaviour is by boys. There are some occasions when the work set fails to ignite students' enthusiasm. There are insufficient opportunities for individual choice and creativity, or enough adaptation of the work to provide for students' differing needs, including those with special educational needs. Key Stage 4 teaching contains none of these weaknesses.

89. The department is well led and some significant change has been accomplished. Since the last inspection, provision has been improved in Key Stage 4. There is now a good range of well designed courses available, although lower than average percentages of students opt for the subject. Extended writing is now a strength, especially in Key Stage 4. There is continuing development of the scheme of work, to broaden the range of experience in Key Stage 3. Strategies to improve students' critical and historical understanding of art are planned by a subject team with a strongly shared commitment to development and improvement. For example, attention is being given to develop students' drawing skills more systematically. The use of ICT remains undeveloped and the subject is still under resourced. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to raise the quality of teaching and students' progress in Key Stage 3.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

90. Year 2000 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that students are achieving close to the national average. The GCSE results for grades A\*-C were below the national average, overall. Results in food technology were above the national average and in textiles well above the national average. Girls perform better than boys at both key stages. The results at both key stages continue to improve. The poor quality of accommodation and the lack of resources for resistant materials and graphic design is having a negative effect on the standards that students can achieve in these areas of the curriculum.
91. Inspection evidence shows that by the time they are aged 14, students' attainment is in line with the national average. The department's concentration on developing skills in designing and making has ensured good quality outcomes, particularly in textiles and food technology. Students have a satisfactory understanding of designing and ways of presenting their work to communicate their ideas for designs. Technical skills are good. Students understand the working characteristics of a range of materials and how to use tools safely and accurately. The quality of finished products demonstrates an attention to detail, accuracy and precision. For example, when designing and making a puppet, students fit their design to very specific criteria, select suitable materials and use construction processes confidently and with reasonable accuracy. Their graphic and illustration techniques to produce their designs have shortcomings, and this is evident in their work in making a coat hook and producing a leaflet for an attraction. In food technology, students can write a specification for sweet and savoury foods and produce products to a high standard. Students can make decisions about suitable ingredients and have a satisfactory level of understanding of a healthy balanced diet.
92. From the evidence of students' design work and practical projects, their attainment by the end of Year 11 is average and broadly reflects previous examination results. Current work with resistant materials is below expectations; work in textiles and food technology is above expectations and students pay particular attention to accuracy, quality of finish and the selection of materials and ingredients. In their design work, they develop a satisfactory understanding of construction techniques. Presentation of work is of a high quality in textiles and food technology. Students have limited experience of control technology and computer aided design and standards are below average.
93. All students make good progress by the time they reach the end of Year 9. Their knowledge of design technology increases steadily. The opportunities to solve problems and work independently or in groups, develop their practical and design skills and their skills of investigation and research. This occurs through a range of activities in resistant materials, electronics, graphics, textiles and food technology. In food technology, when making a fruit

crumble, students made good progress because they are briefed about what they have to do in detail, listen to instructions carefully and work in teams to specific time limits. They make good progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills in textiles lessons when designing and making cushions.

94. Students enter in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are below average overall. In their early lessons, students make good progress in learning practical skills and the underlying theory on tasks that are precisely structured with clear learning objectives for each week. The department emphasises good standards of graphical skills and presentation of work but in some aspects of design and technology this still has to be developed. By the end of Year 9, all students have experienced a range of activities in resistant materials, electronics, graphics, textiles and food technology. At present there are opportunities to develop ICT skills through the subject, particularly in food technology and textiles but the use of computers to cover all the strands of ICT is limited.
95. Students make good progress by the age of 16 particularly in food technology and textiles. Their knowledge of designing and making improves steadily because students can consolidate their learning satisfactorily and build on their skills of designing. Their practical competence to solve more complex problems of textile design and their knowledge of food preparation improves effectively. They know how their work is assessed and quickly learn how to judge their standards and how to improve.
96. By the end of Year 11 students are familiar with the design process and a range of materials. In graphics lessons they can design and produce models to demonstrate their ideas and can use their imagination to produce creative designs for a range of products. They evaluate commercially produced snack foods as part of a project to prepare their own snack meals using a variety of basic ingredients. In textiles lessons, they have designed and produced wall hangings and items of soft furnishing to a high standard. Students develop design briefs for their projects and can communicate their ideas verbally, graphically and in writing. Designing skills particularly in resistant materials are unsatisfactory. At both key stages, students with special educational needs make good progress, especially when extra support is provided in class.
97. The behaviour of students and their attitude to learning are satisfactory. Generally, students show an interest in their work and maintain good levels of concentration to work to their best standards. They listen attentively and watch carefully to understand what they must do and show pride in their achievements. They respond well to teachers and they can work without close supervision. They take responsibility for their areas of work and in organising their tasks. On occasions pupil attitudes and behaviour adversely affect the quality of learning.
98. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, and ranges from unsatisfactory to good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and plan well to ensure that lessons have suitable pace. In the best lessons, practical activities are well organised and the supervision of lessons effective, with appropriate interventions to support and sustain individual students' learning. Work is sufficiently linked to the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers' expectations of students' performance and behaviour are high. Learning objectives are clearly stated but work is not always flexibly planned to provide for students' different levels of attainment and interests. Students' work is assessed regularly and teachers give helpful oral and written comments. Assessment concentrates upon tracking experiences and outcomes and individual targets are used to inform students what they need to do to improve their work. The department also sets overall targets for attainment across each year group. Homework is set to reinforce the content of lessons. Students can use computers to extend their skills in handling text and graphics and the use of embroidery machines but at present the teaching of computer aided design and control is limited. The department helps to develop students' literacy skills through discussion, writing design briefs and critical evaluation of their project work. Their vocabulary is extended through the use of key words and technical terminology. Students consolidate their numeracy skills through the use of calculation of length, weight, angles and time. There is no recognition of gifted and talented students. On occasions, low expectations for both behaviour and work make the quality of teaching unsatisfactory.

99. The leadership and management of the department are good, with a clear vision and direction to promote curricular improvements. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with management responsibilities, although formal monitoring and evaluation are underdeveloped. Schemes of work are appropriate and the development plan identifies appropriate key areas for improvement. Priorities have also been listed for the second phase application to the Technology Colleges Trust. The faculty system of management and organisation does not benefit the design and technology department. Too little time is given to discussing issues that are directly related to the development of design and technology. This is a Technology College but the department is not a free standing area of the curriculum as would be expected.
100. Despite the hard work and commitment of staff, further progress to raise standards is being adversely affected because of the lack of resources and equipment. There is totally inadequate provision to teach resistant materials at Key Stage 3 and the courses offered at GCSE/GNVQ. The hand tools are in a poor condition and some are unsafe to use, resulting in the inappropriate use of tools available. The lack of resources for newer technologies and information technology limits coverage of the programmes of study and the standards that students can attain.
101. Accommodation in some areas of the department is poor; the size and number of rooms is appropriate for the number of students being taught but some rooms are not suitably equipped for the type of courses being offered. A significant number of rooms are in a poor condition and do not present a good working environment. In one Year 10 lesson, students trying to complete practical course work in a classroom were working in unsafe conditions.
102. The issues of accommodation and resources were raised in the last inspection report and these have not been fully addressed. The amount of technician time available is inadequate to meet the specialist needs of the department. A safety audit has been carried out but the necessary improvements to ensure the safe organisation of resources and accommodation in the graphic design and resistant materials workshops have not been implemented. The technician does not have the necessary certification to operate workshop equipment.
103. The department has made good progress with the other areas identified for development in the last inspection. There has been significant improvement in the teacher assessment results at Key Stage 3 and GCSE results for textiles. There has been some improvement in the use of design and graphics particularly in textiles. The joint planning covering all aspects of design technology ensures that the work is challenging and provides progression. There are satisfactory systems in place to monitor students' progress and attainment. The department still has to develop projects relating to systems and control and computer aided design.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

104. Attainment on entry is below the national average and many students have poor literacy skills. Students arrive with a strong sense of their own locality but knowing little of the wider world. Many are deficient in a range of learning skills.
105. By the age of 14, teacher assessments show that standards are above the national average. Inspection evidence confirms these assessments. Students rapidly developed their confidence. For example, when working in groups, they understand and can apply the factors influencing the location of industry in Japan, clearly explaining their reasoning. All students make good, and a significant minority, very good progress between the ages of 11 and 14. The highest prior attainers are well extended. The large numbers of average and slightly below average students raise their commitment and achievement to improve their progress. Students with special educational needs are very well supported by their teachers. When learning support staff are present their progress is further enhanced, enabling them to achieve well. They are unafraid to make mistakes and write at increasing length.
106. By the age of 16 standards are above average. It was not possible to observe Year 11 lessons because of study release for GCSE examinations, but conversations with students and the

scrutiny of their work show that students make very good progress in a very well planned examination course. GCSE examination results in 2000 were very good and were significantly above national averages at A\*-C and A\*-G. Many students achieved better than might be expected for their prior attainment, performing significantly better in geography than in other subjects. For example, most boys attained a whole grade better in geography than in their other subjects. These standards have been maintained over four years. Teachers have very high expectations of work and behaviour that are fully met by the students. Most students have positive attitudes and enjoy their work. They have a good understanding of both physical and human geography. For example, they understand the characteristics of limestone and can explain the processes which take place to form the characteristic scenery associated with this rock type. They can explain the factors which affect the development of settlements and their functions.

107. Teaching is mostly very good and no lessons were observed where the teaching was less than good. The policy of having three humanities subjects taught where possible by the same teacher is most effective in socialising younger students into good learning habits in Year 7. Students and their individual needs are well known and relationships between teachers and students are always very good. Students with special educational needs are very well supported and make good progress. Some teachers work outside their subject specialism, but the quality of teamwork and advanced preparation eliminates any shortcomings and the subject specialists have very good knowledge.
108. Lessons begin with very good and immediate sharing with the students of what they are going to do and why. A simple writing task related to the lesson is used to settle the class and the lesson is reviewed at the end to ensure that targets have been met. Students are very well managed: one teacher reassured an over-anxious and over-active boy in Year 7 very effectively. The reward system is effectively used, and in Year 7, students play games to revise prior learning. They laugh often and learning is fun. The pace of lessons is brisk. Time is very well used and students produce much work. The challenging style of teaching builds students' confidence and the requirement to be active allows them to use physical as well as intellectual and creative energy. They are kept so busy that they do not have time to go off task. Teachers use resources very well. For example, videos are used most effectively and students enjoy the visual stimulus of action and colour and make good gains in their knowledge and understanding. The library is very well used as a research base, using books, CD-ROMS and the Internet. Teachers use local and regional fieldwork very well as an important activity for developing students' skills, as well as their knowledge and understanding, thus supporting the consistently high standard of GCSE course work. Teachers' use of assessment is very good. Students always know their target grades and that they are expected to improve on them. Homework, which is regularly set and assessments are closely marked and realistic targets are set for future progress. These are well achieved.
109. The teaching of basic skills varies. Literacy is very well supported. Most lessons contain some elements to develop listening, speaking, reading out loud, and writing. Many students are better at speaking than writing. Writing is encouraged and students are shown how to write at greater length by the skilful use of word frames and by frequent drafting and rewriting of work. Students are at all times expected to use what they know and understand how to answer questions and to solve problems. They are encouraged in this by very good open questioning. Numeracy is less well supported and though teachers use number habitually in lessons, the use of number in GCSE course work is insufficiently demanding. Appropriate use is made of ICT, although staff recognise that there is need for further development to support teaching and learning.
110. The department is exceptionally well managed by the teacher in charge who operates very effectively within the well-managed faculty. Teaching and learning are closely monitored and the marking of books is regularly checked. The results are shared openly. The improvement since the last inspection is very good in relation to standards. The only weakness is that students' reports are unsatisfactory and have remained so since the last inspection. There are shortcomings in resources. There are insufficient books and atlases. The teacher in charge prepares good booklets, although there is insufficient care taken to ensure that the copying is of a high quality to encourage students as they use them. Teachers' workrooms are over-crowded and there are insufficient classrooms so that a quarter of lessons in the lower school

take place in non-specialist rooms, making extra demands for resources although teachers' commitment negates any detrimental effect on standards.

## HISTORY

111. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment overall is above that expected nationally, an improvement on the standards reported at the time of the last inspection. Teacher assessments reflect this inspection judgement. The students' attainment at the end of Year 11 for the GCSE course is above the national average for both boys and girls. Results in GCSE examinations were above the national average in 2000 and nearly a quarter of the students gained an A or A\* grade. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Only a small amount of work by Year 11 students could be seen during the inspection, as the students were on study leave to their GCSE examinations. The work which was seen was above average.
112. Students in Year 9 see the causes of past events and explain successfully the reasons for actions taken by people at various times. Higher-attaining students can evaluate the relative importance of a number of causes. Students identify changes and continuities in history and see that there are similarities and differences between the past and the present, as for example, in work on medieval medicine. Most students have good research and communication skills and they use ICT well to search for evidence about the past. Most use databases and web-sites confidently and competently, although the lower attainers often have difficulty identifying relevant information. Most students use sources effectively, make valid deductions from the evidence and evaluate successfully the reliability of such evidence. The highest attaining students write well but the style and presentation for a minority of students is immature and often contains many spelling errors.
113. Students taking the GCSE course identify the characteristics of periods in the past and can explain changes and continuities, similarities and differences between past and present. They understand the significance of the role of individuals in shaping the course of history. In work on Galen, for example, students in Year 10 identified his role in developing medical theories and explained continuities in medical practice. Many students write well at length and the highest attainers produce extended writing of a very good quality, as for example in coursework assignments in Year 11. Written work by a minority lacks depth of analysis and tends to be narrative and descriptive.
114. Most students have good attitudes towards their work in lessons. They show interest and many ask questions of their teachers in order to find out more about a topic. Students in the main are co-operative and helpful. They work well in pairs or small groups, supporting and helping one another, for example, in work using computers by students in Years 8 and 9. With a very small number of exceptions, students behave well, and in many lessons they behave very well. Relationships are good, and the majority of students respond to their teachers by paying attention, working hard and so making good progress in their learning.
115. The teaching is good overall, and never less than satisfactory. It was very good or better in four of the ten lessons seen. This leads to the good progress made by the majority of students in all year groups. Teachers know their subject well and plan lessons effectively, taking account of the students' prior attainment and using appropriate resources. Many lessons are broken into short activities followed by immediate feedback. This allows both teachers and students to check what has been learned helps to maintain concentration. Time is well used. Teachers manage students very well, dealing well with the very small numbers who misbehave.
116. Teaching, especially in Years 7 to 9, has improved since the last inspection. In an excellent lesson in Year 9, the teacher used a textbook, a poem, and a video very effectively to help students understand the impact of evacuation on the evacuees and those taking them into their homes. The teacher's questioning about what each resource contributed to an overall picture of the impact of evacuation was challenging, providing the students with a very good opportunity to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding. Good use is made of computers to provide a range of source material for research and to enable students to record and present their own findings about the past. For example, students in Year 8 research local

census material to build up a picture of a village in the late nineteenth century and students in Year 9 use the 'PowerPoint' computer program to create group presentations on major events in World War 2. The teaching of GCSE examination groups is good, as for example, in a lesson on Islamic medical advances in the eleventh century. The students use a card sorting exercise to identify characteristics of the period, before choosing from five options how to record their work in the lesson. The highest attainers have good opportunities to develop their essay writing. Students with special educational needs make good progress in Year 7 to 9. They make satisfactory progress on the GCSE course, but their progress is hampered by their low literacy levels, which slow the pace of reading, of oral work and of the completion of written work. Students are encouraged to read aloud in many lessons and teachers help the lower attainers with pronunciation. Where there are shortcomings in a minority of lessons, the work set does not meet the needs of the higher-attaining students and they make only satisfactory, rather than good, progress. Not all lessons end with an effective summary to check what has been learned.

117. The leadership and management of the department are very good, reflected in the very good progress made since the last inspection. The system of assessment, especially in Years 7 to 9 is now very good. Students' attainment and progress are regularly monitored and recorded through an appropriate variety of assessment tasks. National Curriculum requirements are met. The work of the department is well-monitored and there is a clear commitment to continuing to improve standards that are already above average. The provision of resources overall is unsatisfactory. The department makes good use of centrally-provided computer facilities to support teaching and learning, but there are no computers in the department and the central resources are not always readily available. There are insufficient textbooks for students in Years 7 to 9, especially for lower attainers and students taking GCSE.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

118. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the attainment of students is well above the standard expected nationally, although this is not reflected in all of the work seen during the inspection. Accreditation in ICT at the end of Year 11 is through key skills examinations and a significant number achieve the higher level.
119. By the end of Year 9 attainment in the discrete lessons is in line with the national average within a range of activities. Students have sound skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information and the simple use of formulae to make calculations. They can use desktop publishing to a satisfactory level of competence. The use of computers for all strands of the programmes of study is in line with the national average for their age as they have sufficient opportunity to develop these aspects but not for control technology and in computer aided design. Students have access to the Internet, which they use competently to carry out project research and they can download images and data. They can create and retrieve information from a database.
120. By the end of Year 11, standards are average. Students are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software. They can apply their skills appropriately to solve more complex problems particularly in handling information and data. The higher attaining students understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality.
121. Students make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and application of a range of skills in the subject in Year 7. There are opportunities for students to use computers and practise these skills in other subjects which helps their progress, particularly in science, history and modern foreign languages. In both key stages the majority of students, including students with special educational needs, make progress through a range of opportunities to develop aspects of information handling, desk top publishing, data logging and word processing, but not in control systems and computer aided drawing.
122. Students have good attitudes to the subject and generally behave very well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and, with few exceptions, work hard to master new skills. All lessons

include much independent work, which students enjoy as their confidence grows. Most students turn up promptly for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work and set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them.

123. Specialist lessons are only taught in Year 7. The teaching is good and this contributes to students' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. Lessons are very well planned and have suitable challenge. The management of classes is good. Work set generally meets the differing needs of the students and maintains their interest. Relationships are very good and the skilled support given to students in their work quickly builds their confidence. Teachers motivate students and recognise their success. Projects are presented in a variety of contexts giving students an understanding of the world they live in.
124. Management is good. There are schemes of work and policy statements to support the planning, teaching, monitoring and assessment of the subject. ICT is a key area for whole school development. There has been an effective response to the issues from the last inspection and improvements have been made in the quality of resources, staffing and access to computers for students. The use of ICT across the curriculum has still not been adequately addressed and procedures for monitoring and evaluation are not comprehensive. The ratio of computers to students is in line with the national average but continued investment in equipment and resources is necessary. Technical support is very good. There are opportunities for students to use computers during the lunchtime where students can develop their computer skills and access the Internet. The second phase application for funding from the Technology College Trust sets out an action plan for the development of ICT across the school and includes costings, responsibilities and dates for completion.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

125. GCSE results have been well below national standards, and those in similar schools, in recent years. Standards have also been lower than in most other subjects in the school. Standards in Year 10 are below the national average, reflecting slightly higher standards than in previous examination results. Teacher assessments at age 14 were slightly below national averages in year 2000. By the end of Year 9, standards in listening, speaking, reading and writing are broadly average.
126. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 students make satisfactory progress, although standards are stronger in listening, reading, and writing, than in speaking. For example, students in Year 8 can access pictures of clothes from a French catalogue on the Internet and list the name, price and colour of various items. When listening to a French tape about booking a hotel room, a Year 10 class can identify the numbers of people and rooms, the length of stay and other details. The students can pick out verbs in the present, perfect and future tenses when reading a text. When writing, students do not check their work carefully enough. They make errors in grammar and spelling, preventing them from achieving higher standards. Girls usually perform better than boys, and there are no significant variations between different groups of students.
127. The overall quality of teaching is good, with examples of very good lessons and no unsatisfactory teaching. This teaching is improving standards and ensuring that most students make at least satisfactory and in the best lessons, good, progress in relation to their prior attainment. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, have good subject knowledge, project their voices clearly and have good accents. They use the foreign language well and sometimes resort to the use of English to support students' understanding, although they occasionally do this too much. They use pair work to give intensive practice to support the development of students' speaking and listening skills, although this activity is not always used sufficiently. Good use is made of whole class chorus work to develop good pronunciation and intonation, as well as games and role-play exercises. They use resources effectively to increase learning, with some good use of overhead projectors. Teachers manage classes effectively and time is

well used. Students' work is assessed regularly and the results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good.

## **Spanish**

128. There are currently no students learning Spanish in Year 9. GCSE results have been well below national standards and in comparison with similar schools, in recent years. Standards have also been lower than in most other subjects in the school. Observations were very limited during the inspection because Year 11 had commenced study leave. Judgements are based on a scrutiny of students' work, limited discussions with students and discussions with staff. Standards in Year 10 are below national averages. Standards are stronger in listening, reading, and writing, and weaker in speaking. Students can identify different foods when reading and listening to a Spanish tape. They can talk about various meals and write about their daily routine for homework. Overall, errors in writing mirror the weaknesses made above for French.
129. In the one lesson seen in Year 10 the quality of teaching was good and led to students making clear progress through the good sequence of activities. The good use of the foreign language for parts of the lesson enhanced students' progress although English was occasionally used too much. Good subject knowledge and expertise and the use of resources effectively increased learning. Time was generally used well.
130. In both languages, the majority of students behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration and develop good study skills. Many students 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 students find it difficult to concentrate and develop their potential. Support for students with special educational needs is broadly satisfactory in Key Stage 3 but work does not always meet their needs.
131. Students spend most of their time using the foreign languages in listening, speaking, reading and writing: this contributes to their literacy skills. Teachers successfully use numeracy activities. Students have good access to computers and use them well when they have the opportunity, including access to Internet resources. Good display of students' work and other authentic material, increase the students' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned, although displays in some classrooms are inadequate to support students' learning.
132. The faculty is very well led and organised, has prioritised development plans, and works well as a team. The head of faculty has a positive effect on standards through the effective monitoring of students' progress. Improvement in recent months has been good. The quality of teaching and learning is improving, and this is improving standards. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Visits to France and Spain encourage social interaction and personal responsibility and improve language competence and cultural awareness. The textbooks and other materials used add to the awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The accommodation suffers because some rooms do not have sufficient effective blinds and there are limitations in resources of textbooks, readers, magazines, and computer software. These shortcomings have a detrimental effect on standards.

## **MUSIC**

133. By the time students reach the end of Year 9 standards are above average in performance, composition and improvisation, using electronic keyboards, percussion instruments and voices, as well as on their "main" instruments. Most students develop reasonable finger dexterity on the keyboards. They know the names of the notes and understand how familiar scales and chords are formed. They can read simple melodic lines represented on staff notation. Students' knowledge and use of musical terminology are very good. This helps them particularly when they listen to, and analyse musical extracts. In one lesson, using extracts of



background music to films, they effectively identified the instrumentation, dynamics, texture and melodic motifs. Students also learn about music from the main historical periods and understand the associated forms, for example, concerto, oratorio, sonata and symphony.

134. In year 2000 GCSE examinations, results were well above the national average. Whilst no lessons could be observed in Year 11 the quality of tape-recorded and written work confirms that the overall standard of performance, composition and listening is above the national average by the age of sixteen, closely reflecting these previous results. Some performances and compositions are of a very high standard, including pieces for electric guitar and songs which often have very well harmonised second vocal parts. Work in students' files includes well-presented notes on the major historical periods and analyses of pieces, for example *The Hallelujah Chorus*. Students have very good knowledge of musical conventions and use the technical language of music, which provides them with real confidence and fluency in their historical and analytical studies.
135. The quality of learning in Years 7-9 is good overall. Students enter the school with below average attainment and varied musical experiences. Most students respond and learn well in lessons where the teaching is good. Some classes are very enthusiastic. In these lessons, they learn to repeat and read simple rhythmic patterns and to read melodies using both staff and solfa notation. Especially good learning was observed in Year 7 where students sang simple melodic exercises expressively in rounds. Both boys and girls respond very well to the strong emphasis on singing in lessons. They also build up good knowledge and understanding of the musical rudiments, including terminology. In one lesson in Year 8, students listened to a piece composed and recorded by one of their peers. They analysed the musical structure and identified details, for example, whether the melody moves in steps or leaps. In most lessons, students are identified in groups according to levels of attainment, although in practical activities they work in mixed groups in which they cooperate well to ensure effective learning. Students with special educational needs are fully included in classroom activities. They achieve well and make good progress. In Years 10-11 almost all students learn well. At this stage the requirements of the GCSE course motivates them to reach the required standards in performing, composing and musical understanding. Inspection evidence shows that they are very committed to their individual lessons and extra-curricular ensembles.
136. Overall, the majority of students' have very good attitudes to learning and are mature. Behaviour in most lessons is very good, but where class management and control are ineffective some students - particularly in Year 8 – undermine learning for the whole class. Positive attitudes towards their own learning do not develop sufficiently in the these classes.
137. Teaching is good overall, although it ranges very widely from excellent to poor. Where teaching is very good, and sometimes excellent, teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise. Higher attainers have suitably challenging work. Frequently teachers use their own personal musical skills to demonstrate how a piece should be played or sung, or to direct students in listening tests. Very good attention is paid throughout to the teaching of literacy. The focus is essentially on technical terms and conventions that help students to listen and think about music intelligently. Lessons are very well prepared, with each section carefully timed. In the best lessons, there is a good and effective range of teaching methods to ensure all students listen and learn well; tasks are very well designed to challenge individual students according to the levels they have already attained. There are high expectations for work and attention. A large team of visiting instrumental teachers makes a very good contribution to students' musical education, not only in their lessons with individuals, but also in teaching groups and directing ensembles The poor teaching is due to weak management of students, which means that only minimal progress is made in the lesson. Homework is set appropriately to reinforce or extend what has been taught in lessons and includes regular practice for those who receive instrumental lessons.
138. There has been good overall improvement in the subject since the previous inspection. The department is very well led and organised by an enthusiastic teacher who is involved in important regional and national initiatives in music education. Day-to-day and longer-term assessment is good overall, with some very good features. It is effectively used in planning to devise suitably challenging work, set targets for individuals and to record and report attainment

and progress with confidence. Accommodation is limited and not wholly appropriate for teaching what the National Curriculum requires. The second main classroom is housed on the stage where it is impossible to have a permanent store of instruments, hi-fi equipment and other resources. As a consequence, students do not have sufficient experience on electronic keyboards. About 100 students receive instrumental lessons and at least 150 are regularly involved in a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The choir, which includes boys, performs to a high standard. Choral work is a strength of the school. Music makes a very good contribution to the social and cultural life of the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

139. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in year 2000 were in line with the national average. The evidence of the inspection confirms this judgement. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is in line with the national average. Most students can apply the techniques, skills and competition rules to several activities, including cricket, athletics and rounders. Basic skills are at least average for a majority of students and provide a platform for future development. In athletics most students have good basic sprinting technique which they can apply to the relay. In cricket, good basic ball skills are applied in both batting and bowling. In a more able set in rounders many students have very good tracking and striking skills and a good knowledge and understanding of the game and the rules. The students' skills in observing and analysing performance are developing effectively.
140. GCSE results in 2000 were in line with the national average. Theory work for students in Year 11 is comprehensive and completed in appropriate detail and they take pride in their work. Practical assessments reflect their ability in a good range of sports. The overall attainment of students in Year 10 is in line with the national average. The good standards achieved in sprinting by a set of higher attaining boys show how they effectively draw on their very good knowledge and understanding of sprinting technique.
141. When compared to their earlier attainment, students' achievement in lessons at both key stages is generally good. In a GCSE theory lesson students developed a good understanding of factors affecting performance in sport and applied this to a growing understanding of the influence of drugs. In athletics, skills in field events are not always as refined as would be expected in some lessons in Year 10, given the amount of time spent on them in Key Stage 3. The majority of boys refined existing sprinting skills and developed their technique and their understanding very effectively to improve performance. Girls in a Year 9 athletics lesson made rapid improvement in their sprinting technique and were then able to apply this to developing very good take-over technique in the relay. Lessons in both key stages consistently teach students how to prepare for and recover from specific activities and stress the benefits of regular exercise; there are also discrete units of work at both key stages on health related fitness. Support for students with special educational needs is satisfactory.
142. Attitudes to learning are usually positive at both key stages. Most students are well behaved and co-operative. They demonstrate a real enjoyment of the subject, are attentive and able to sustain concentration. Relations between students and between students and staff are good. Opportunities for students to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach or official are still developing. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and fixtures with other schools, which provide opportunities for students to extend and develop their skills and interests. School teams compete with other schools in a range of sports and some students achieve representative honours.
143. Overall the quality of teaching is good. In 25 per cent of lessons, teaching is very good. In these lessons a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to students through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Target setting is well used. For example, in a Year 9 athletics lesson, the constant setting of realistic and challenging targets led to rapid developments in students' sprinting and relay take-over technique. In a very good Year 10 athletics lesson, students developed and refined their sprinting technique. There are good opportunities for students to work individually, to assess their own and other students' performance and to take responsibility for their own learning. Thorough planning incorporating varied teaching

strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities is a feature of the best lessons. Discipline and class management are usually good, ensuring that the pace of most lessons is brisk. Teachers regularly assess performance during the best lessons to enhance teaching and learning. Where teaching has shortcomings is when opportunities are missed to involve students in evaluation and analysis of performance to help learning. Girls in a Year 10 athletics lesson underachieved when the objectives for the lesson were inappropriate and when the work was not challenging enough. Specific activities to challenge the potentially higher attaining students were rarely provided and these students were not achieving their potential in a minority of lessons. In written work, marking does not consistently identify in enough detail how students can improve. Students not taking part are not appropriately engaged in several lessons.

144. Departmental leadership is satisfactory and day-to-day organisation is very good. Staff are good role models, are committed and give generously of their time. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, although time at Key Stage 3 is generous and at Key Stage 4 is below average. Nevertheless, the range of activities provides good preparation for post-16 leisure activities. Development planning is satisfactory but there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning and of the targets within the plan, to share good practice and assess progress. Schemes of work are being developed and whilst they are sound working documents they do not provide specific guidance on developing the potential of all students. The recording of assessment is good. Students are assessed on entry and achievement is recorded at the end of each unit of work. Students are insufficiently involved and the criteria used are not specific to the activity or linked to schemes of work. There are plans to reconcile the different systems at present being used by boys and girls. Teaching accommodation is good. Showering and toilet facilities are inadequate and in some cases unclean and represent a health and safety hazard. Office accommodation is inadequate.
145. Satisfactory progress has been made in addressing issues from the last inspection report. The gymnastics scheme of work has been reviewed, staff training completed and teaching and learning styles in this activity, modified. A range of teaching styles is now used throughout although the use of evaluation of performance by students is still developing.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

146. Standards at the end of both key stages are above the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Teacher assessments show that the large majority of the students at the end of Year 9 reach or exceed these expectations. Inspection evidence supports the teacher assessments. Students make good progress in Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 9, they can write coherently about the different religions they have studied and discuss them in a sensible way. Further progress is made in Years 10 and 11, where students discuss well, write at greater length and with much sensitivity. Students at the end of Year 11 are entered for the short course GCSE in religious education; two thirds of the cohort achieved grades A\*-C in last year's examination, which is above the national average.
147. Good teaching contributes to the high standards. Teaching is almost always good and sometimes very good. This is particularly true of teaching in the GCSE classes, where good planning and use of resources ensure good learning. In Year 10 lessons on gender differences, in the unit on 'Social Harmony', the strategic use of a video in conjunction with well-thought out work sheets enabled discussions of some maturity to take place in preparation for a study of how male and female roles are regarded in Christianity and Hinduism. In some classes, good use was made of team teaching. Teachers have high expectations and occasionally the work is not appropriate to cater for the differing needs found in the mixed ability classes, but teacher support, and careful groupings of students, help to alleviate this shortcoming. Teachers generally have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subject, even though most of those teaching religious education are non-specialists. They help students to learn *from* religions as well as *about* them; this was particularly noticeable in Year 8 lessons on the Hajj, where students were asked to reflect on Muslims' feelings about completing the pilgrimage to Mecca and did so with some sensitivity. Independent learning is encouraged, with relevant homework making a good contribution.

148. Students have positive attitudes and this makes a good contribution to their progress. Their attitudes and behaviour reflect the good teaching and they respond to the challenges and expectations very well. They co-operate well with their teachers and with each other; group work is particularly effective. Students treat the subject and the beliefs that it presents for study with respect. They have confidence in their teachers, who are also respected.
149. The subject is taught within the humanities faculty and follows a common pattern of target setting and assessment. The nine staff in the faculty all teach other humanities subjects, so students often have the same teacher for religious education, history and geography. There are some clear advantages in this arrangement, not least that the teachers get to know their students well. The disadvantage of a lack of specialist knowledge is overcome by strong subject leadership within the faculty. The head of religious education, like her equivalents in history and geography, disseminates expertise to colleagues and provides a framework for the subject that all can follow easily and contribute to with confidence. Teaching standards are monitored thoroughly by heads of faculty and department.
150. The subject is mostly taught in the humanities teaching rooms, although a quarter of lessons have to be taught in non-specialist rooms, which creates problems for access to resources, such as computers, videos and sets of books. There are adequate resources although the adoption of new syllabuses has not been funded. The use of computers is underdeveloped, reflecting the lack of resources.
151. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. The school now follows the Agreed Syllabus for North Somerset and the introduction of the short course GCSE for all students in Years 10 and 11 means that statutory requirements are now being met. Standards have risen. The subject is now more organised within the faculty. The previous modular approach has been abandoned, allowing for better continuity in each subject. Each subject is reported on separately and students have an accurate picture, as a result of regular testing, of the levels they are attaining.