

INSPECTION REPORT

**ALTWOOD CHURCH OF
ENGLAND SCHOOL**

Altwood Road
Maidenhead

LEA area : 868

Unique Reference Number : 110080

Headteacher : Elizabeth Allen

Reporting inspector : Doug Close
5684

Dates of inspection : 18 - 22 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708042

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Comprehensive
Type of control :	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils :	11 to 18
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Altwood Road Maidenhead Berks. SL6 4PU
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Appropriate authority :	Governing body
Name of chair of governors :	Michael Holness
Date of previous inspection :	20 - 26 November 1995

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	Sixth Form	Teaching
		Leadership and management
		The efficiency of the school
Cliff Hayes, Lay Inspector	Key Stage 4	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Maureen Cawdron	English	
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Chris Elliott	Science	
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Derek Esp	History	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
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The Registrar, The Office for Standards in Education, Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Teachers provide very good support and guidance and a very wide range of extra-curricular activities
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are all good
- Teaching is generally good and most students make good progress in their learning
- There are strong links with the community and industry
- Provision in the Speech and Language Resource is very good

Where the school has weaknesses

- The cost per student is high and this cannot be sustained in future
- IT provision is unsatisfactory and does not meet National Curriculum requirements
- Students' standards of attainment are satisfactory but could be further improved

The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of students at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has maintained almost all of the strengths which were identified in the inspection in 1995 and has made significant progress on addressing each of the five key issues. For example, the quality of teaching in music was unsatisfactory in 1995 but is now very good; across the school there is now a high proportion of good or better teaching. Since 1995 the Speech and Language Resource has been developed. The school has achieved the Sportsmark award. Many of its systems and procedures have been strengthened including those for assessment of students. Statutory assessment and GCSE results have improved. Attendance has increased. Overall, improvement has been good.

Leadership and management are generally good. The school improvement planning process has been strengthened but the plan itself would benefit from being made more rigorous. Since 1995 the number of students has reduced and this has put strain on school finances. Provided the budget can be brought into balance quickly, the school is well placed for further improvement.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), and General Certificate of Education Advanced/Advanced Supplementary level (A/AS-level) examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			<i>well above average</i> A
			<i>above average</i> B
			<i>average</i> C
			<i>below average</i> D

Key Stage 3	D	D
GCSE examinations	C	B
A/AS – levels	D	

well below average E

The results above should be set in the context of the relatively high proportion of students who enter the school with poor attainment and literacy skills. There is also an open access policy into the sixth form. Standards in subjects vary but are generally satisfactory. Recent statutory assessment and GCSE results have been around the national averages in most subjects. In 1999 key stage 3 (KS3) results were worse than those in 1998, but GCSE results were better. GCSE results were good in design technology (DT), history, English literature, physical education (PE), religious education (RE) and drama. They were satisfactory in all other subjects. In 1999 sixth form results were similar overall to those in 1998. There were good A-level results in art, English, mathematics and PE.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	DT, history, music	Mathematics, modern languages, PE
Years 10-11	Good	Art, DT, geography, history, mathematics, music, science and drama	
Sixth form	Good	Art, DT, history and drama	
English	Satisfactory, regularly good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 91% of the lessons seen. It was very good or better in 21%; good or better in 59%; and unsatisfactory in 9%. The proportions of good and very good teaching are high. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching was in KS3. Most teachers have appropriate subject knowledge but a significant proportion of the unsatisfactory teaching was by non-specialist or part-time staff. Most teachers manage classes well. Many use a range of teaching styles and have appropriate expectations of students, but the pace of a minority of classes is too slow and not enough teachers use strategies and materials matched to the range of needs of students in their classes. Support for students with special educational needs (SEN) is generally satisfactory. It is often good in withdrawal groups and for individuals, and is always good and sometimes very good in the Speech and Language Resource.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Usually good, especially in year 8 (Y8) and the sixth form. There was unsatisfactory student response in almost one lesson in five in Y7. Exclusions are high, but many relate to students transferred from other schools.
Attendance	Attendance levels are higher than the national averages. Most students are punctual to school, though several in Y11 are not.
Ethos*	The school is fostering a positive climate for learning. Relationships and students' attitudes to learning are generally good. There is a commitment by staff to high standards. The ethos is conducive to continued improvement.
Leadership and management	The headteacher provides effective leadership based on clear values. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive and are increasingly involved in policy and strategic planning. Managers at all levels have clear rôles but there are some anomalies in the structure and internal communication is not always effective. Some managers are good; most are satisfactory but have had insufficient training for their management rôles. The school development planning process is good; the plan itself is satisfactory but could be improved by making it more rigorous. Though lesson observation has recently become more common, policy implementation and the quality of teaching and assessment are not adequately monitored.
Curriculum	The curriculum is mainly satisfactory and is currently under review. National Curriculum requirements are not met for information technology (IT) in KS3 and KS4. There is a need for more vocational provision in KS4. The range of A-level subjects is good. General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) are offered at Advanced level and in one case at Intermediate level; apart from this there is little provision for lower attaining students. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Arrangements for assessment have improved considerably. Formal assessments provide a range of data for tracking attainment and progress. Regular student/tutor reviews lead to targets for improvement, but short-term targeting within subjects is weaker.
Pupils with special educational needs	Students with SEN receive good support from SEN staff but more differentiation of the whole curriculum is required to ensure access for all. The Speech and Language Resource is a very good provision.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Students' development is good in each of these areas but multicultural understanding is under-developed.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The school has sufficient teachers with appropriate qualifications and experience though a number teach outside their specialist areas. The pupil:teacher ratio is low. There are more than sufficient administrative and financial support staff, though there is no non-teaching staff support in the Library, Research Centre. Arrangements for staff professional development are satisfactory and there are regular personal reviews. There is more than adequate accommodation. It is particularly good for PE and games. Learning resources are good in most departments. Though developing rapidly the Library, Research Centre is too small and does not as yet meet students' and curriculum needs. There are enough personal computers (PCs) for students' use but the majority cannot provide the facilities required for IT beyond KS3.
Value for money	Progress is good for most students and results have been around national averages. The school provides very good pastoral support and student development is good. The cost per student is high. This is partly because a high proportion of the students have SEN; partly because staff are paid Outer London allowances; and partly because there are high accommodation costs. There are some inefficiencies in staffing and in the sixth form. Despite these, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school encourages parental involvement• The school is approachable• The school keeps parents well informed on progress• The school achieves high work standards• There are good extra-curricular activities• Homework arrangements are good	

Parents completing the pre-inspection questionnaire and those attending the parents' meeting held very positive views of the school. The findings of the inspection team confirmed parental opinion on almost all of these aspects. In respect of high work standards, inspectors found that standards of attainment are satisfactory and most students' progress is good.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

- i) Reduce the average cost per pupil in order to balance the budget [paragraphs 91, 93] and at the same time to allow further expenditure on ICT [90], accommodation [86, 87] and learning resources [88, 89] by:

increasing the pupil:teacher ratio [81] by reducing the level of staffing and/or by marketing the school strongly to increase the number of students [1]
reducing the level of administrative and financial support staff [82]
restructuring management to reduce inefficiency and clarify rôles [72]
completing arrangements to let some under-utilised buildings [86, 93]
reviewing the sixth form curriculum to ensure that all groups are viable economically and educationally [35, 38].

- ii) Provide all students with sufficient information and communication technology (ICT) learning to meet National Curriculum requirements in IT as a subject and IT across the curriculum [159-163, 85, 90, 101, 116, 127 ...].

- iii) Continue to improve standards of attainment [8-14] by:

developing the use of subject specific short-term targets for all students [15, 41, 66] and improving individual education plans (IEPs) for students with SEN [7, 27, 58]
developing the Library, Research Centre as a base for independent learning [88, 16, 19, 82, 86]
enhancing the curriculum to introduce courses such as drama in KS3 and alternative programmes, including vocational ones, in KS4 which could improve motivation for some students [33, 34, 107]
improving the quality of teaching, particularly by addressing the unsatisfactory teaching in KS3 in mathematics, modern languages and PE [24, 25, 31, 32, 77, 113, 114, 169]
enhancing schemes of work and teaching to take more account of the different needs of all students in each group [27, 28, 32, 39, 73, 74, 85, 115 ...]
working to spread the excellent practice already within the school [29-32, 39-40, 41, 45, 77, 85].

In addition to the key issues above there are various less important issues, which should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are:

behaviour [16, 17, 56, 59]; registration [21, 57];
assessment [30, 40, 41]; monitoring [31]; setting [36]; Speech and Language Resource [38];
multi-cultural development [49]; health and safety [63];
SEN code [71]; communication [75]; improvement plan [76]; monitoring [77]; professional development [85]; accommodation [86; 87]; learning resources [89];

English [99-101]; mathematics [114-8]; science [126-8]; art [135-7]; design technology [144];
geography [146, 149]; history [155, 158]; modern languages [169-172]; music [180]; PE [184-5]; RE [189, 191-3].

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Altwood is one of five secondary schools in Maidenhead. It was opened in 1970, by amalgamating two single sex secondary modern schools, and became a mixed, voluntary controlled comprehensive. The two single sex former grammar schools remain very popular and a significant proportion of the brighter students at age 11 move out of Maidenhead into grammar schools in Buckinghamshire or Berkshire, or move into the independent sector. The three other comprehensive schools in Maidenhead are competitive with about 60 spare places each year. Altwood has promoted an inclusive ethos and has a reputation for working well with difficult students and those with SEN. A Speech and Language Resource, in partnership with the charity *I CAN* was opened in 1995. The school has not marketed itself strongly and this is one reason why student enrolments have reduced steadily in the last few years. The roll was 694 in 1995 and is now 545.

2. The school takes students from a fairly wide area of Maidenhead which has mainly favourable economic, social and demographic characteristics. 15% of the students in KS3 and KS4 are entitled to free school meals; 9% come from homes where English is not the first language. The school has many features of a community school: some 2000 people use its facilities each week; there are some strong and mutually beneficial partnerships with local voluntary organisations and groups.

3. The school has a very high percentage of students with statements of SEN (14%). Over half of these are located in the Speech and Language Resource but are integrated as far as possible into the mainstream work of the school. Other students with statements have a range of SEN including specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, visual impairment, and physical disabilities. In all 24% of the students are on the SEN register. National cognitive ability tests (CATs) have been used since 1992. The results show that attainment on intake is relatively weak. Those students taking GCSE in 1999 and the current Y11 showed a fairly normal range of ability on intake with almost half of the year group attaining an average or above score on entry. The proportion with below average scores is much larger in other years: between 60% and 65%. Within this overall picture of attainment the tests show a worsening level of attainment in verbal skills on intake. The proportion gaining the average score or above in verbal tests in the current Y10 was 42%; the proportion in the current Y7 is just 21%.

4. The school was last inspected in November 1995. There were five key issues covering:

- achievement, in particular the achievement of boys, and the most and least able
- the quality of teaching in music and extending good teaching to all classes
- targets and monitoring so that plans for improvement were put into practice consistently
- improving learning resources to promote higher standards and independent learning skills
- statutory requirements in collective worship, appraisal of school teachers, completion of attendance registers, the provision of RE for all students, and IT.

The current school improvement plan includes six whole school target areas:

- students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- display
- presentation of work

- more able students
- literacy
- ICT.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year: 1999

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	60	43	103

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	27	37	26
	Girls	38	23	18
	Total	65	60	44
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	63	58	43
	National	63	62	55
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	32	30	10
	National	23	35	20

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	26	31	36
	Girls	28	21	27
	Total	54	52	63
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	53	51	61
	National	64	64	60
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	20	29	22
	National	(28)	(37)	(29)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year: 1999

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	71	31	102

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	39	60	62
	Girls	16	29	30
	Total	55	89	92
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	54	87	90
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7

Number studying for approved vocational Qualifications or units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	0	
National		(92)

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	30	23	53

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	12.2	17.8	14.6	2.9	3.7	3.3
National	(17.2)	(17.8)	(17.5)	(2.7)	(2.9)	(2.9)

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of *such students* Who achieved these qualifications:

	Number	% Success Rate
School	8	63
National		(72)

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

³ Figures in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year : 1998/9

		%
Authorised Absence	School	6.0
	National comparative data	(8.1)
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.1
	National comparative data	(1.0)

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year : 1998/9

	Number
Fixed period	66
Permanent	4

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	21
Satisfactory or better	91
Less than satisfactory	9

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5. The school has a very high percentage of students with statements of SEN (14%). Over half of these are located in the Speech and Language Resource but are integrated as far as possible into the mainstream work of the school. Other students with statements have a range of SEN including specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, visual impairment and physical disabilities. In all 24% of the students are on the SEN register. National CATs have been used since 1992. The results show that attainment on intake is relatively weak. Those students taking GCSE in 1999 and the current Y11 showed a fairly normal range of ability on intake with almost half of the year group attaining an average or above score on entry. The proportion with below average scores is much larger in other years: between 60% and 65%. Within this overall picture of attainment the tests show a worsening level of attainment in verbal skills on intake. The proportion gaining the average score or above in verbal tests in the current Y10 was 42%; the proportion in the current Y7 is just 21%.

6. From this low base most students make good progress throughout the school. Progress was satisfactory or better in 90% of the lessons seen; it was good or better in 52% of the lessons seen; and very good in 10%. Progress in KS4 and in the sixth form was particularly good, with almost two thirds of the classes seen in both key stages showing good progress. In KS3 progress was least good in Y7, where it was unsatisfactory in 20% of lessons, and good in 31%. In Y8 and Y9 progress was unsatisfactory in almost 15% of the lessons, but was good in 44%. The relatively weak progress in Y7 is probably due to the fact that the inspection took place in the first half of the autumn term before all students had settled into the routines of the school. The progress students make varies with the quality of teaching.

Good progress is seen when students understand the relevance of the work they are doing and are stimulated by more challenging work. In English most students make at least satisfactory progress in KS3, many improve their ability to present their point of view and develop some analytical skills. Good progress is made by many students with SEN. In KS4 progress varies from unsatisfactory to very good and is at least satisfactory overall. In the sixth form students make good progress. Progress in mathematics in KS3 is steady and sometimes good. Numeracy skills show improvement, often from a relatively low baseline. Progress in KS4 is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. In science students with all levels of attainment generally make satisfactory progress in KS3. Students make at least satisfactory progress throughout KS4, and in the sixth form progress is mostly good and occasionally excellent. Across other subjects progress is best in DT, history, music, art and drama. It is least good in KS3 in mathematics, modern languages and PE. Progress in IT is satisfactory in classes but is unsatisfactory over time because of the small allocation of time to the subject.

7. Students with SEN in the main school make satisfactory progress and, in some areas of the curriculum such as English and mathematics, progress is often good. Progress is good when students' needs are specifically addressed or when they are well supported. However, where students do not receive adequate support, progress can be slow. Students in the Speech and Language Resource generally make good progress in the development of their communication skills, and also in subjects. These students have IEPs with clear targets against which progress can be judged. For statemented students in the mainstream annual reviews are held and the information from these is used to inform IEPs which are circulated to

staff. IEPs provide useful targets which assist in planning for students' progress, but because of a change in the system of writing IEPs few have been revised in the present academic year. Clearly focused targets in previous IEPs, together with reviews, suggest that students generally make satisfactory progress against these targets.

8. Overall standards of attainment are satisfactory. Recent results in statutory assessment at KS3 and at GCSE have been around the national averages. Pass rates at A-level have been about the average but students' points scores have been below national average. The standards of attainment observed in classes are about average. Overall attainment was satisfactory or better in 73% of the lessons observed. Standards were above average in 28% of classes. Generally standards improve as students progress through the school. In KS3, 36% of the lessons seen showed unsatisfactory attainment; in KS4 the figure was 29%; and in the sixth form just 5% of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory. The standard of students' practical and written work shows a similar picture in KS3 and KS4. In the sixth form standards of written and practical work are variable but satisfactory overall. Throughout the school students with SEN attain in line with their abilities in most areas of the curriculum. Students in the Speech and Language Resource often attain standards which are good compared to their prior attainment. Overall standards vary between subjects. Standards were particularly high in DT, history and drama. They were satisfactory in all other subjects except IT. Attainment in classes generally aligns with attainment in recent examinations.

9. Results in statutory testing at KS3 have been around the national averages for several years. In 1998 students' performance in the tests in English and science were close to the average. SATs in mathematics were above average. In 1999 results in English and mathematics were close to the national averages but those for science were below average. The teacher assessments in English and mathematics in 1999 were somewhat below the national averages; those in science were about average. Teacher assessments in other subjects were above average in DT, geography, and modern foreign languages. They were below average in history. Teacher assessments in IT were well above average but were based on insufficient data and were very optimistic. In the SATs in 1998 and 1999 there were examples of students from the Speech and Language Centre achieving national norms in mathematics, science and DT.

10. Overall GCSE results have been around the national averages for some years. The overall figures for the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grades (A* to C) was slightly above the national average in each of the last five years, except in 1998. The figure was 43% in 1995, dropped to 37% in 1998, and increased to 54% in 1999. The proportion of students achieving five or more pass grades (A* to G) remained above the national average from 1995 to 1998 but dropped in 1999 to just below average. The average total points score per student was just above the national average throughout the period, except in 1998. The figure was 38.3 in 1995, dropped to 35.4 in 1998, and rose to 39.1 in 1999. Girls' results have generally been better than boys' results, in line with the national picture, but in 1998 boys' and girls' results were similar. Generally these results are around the average for similar schools in the national benchmark statistics, though the results were above those for similar schools in 1999. GCSE results have generally been around or above the national averages in all subjects. This was true in 1999 with the exception of results in the GCSE short course in IT which were poor. Particularly good results were recorded in DT, English literature, history, PE, RE and drama. The most disappointing subject in 1999 was business studies, where only 41% of the 17 students gained a higher grade and four of the 17 did not pass. In most subjects differences between boys' and girls' attainment are similar to the national picture. However, in mathematics girls' attainment has been considerably lower than boys; in English boys' attainment has improved considerably in both language and literature, and boys and girls gained similar GCSE results in 1999 in English literature.

11.

In spite of fluctuations in student numbers the sixth form has built up from 16 candidates taking A-levels in 1995 to 57 taking them in 1999. One reason for this is an open access policy which enables some students to gain satisfactory A-level grades in spite of relatively weak GCSEs. The overall pass rate has improved and was above the national average in 1999. The average points score per candidate taking two or more A-levels has stayed fairly constant for some years. It was 13 in 1995 and 14 in 1999. These figures are somewhat below the national average. In addition to A-levels the school has begun to run GNVQs in performing arts, and in leisure and tourism. Numbers were small last year: seven students completed their study for an advanced GNVQ. Of these two gained distinctions (in performing arts), one gained a merit, and one gained a pass (both in leisure and tourism). One of the two students taking leisure and tourism at intermediate level passed. The overall pass rate at A-level was 91%. Individual subject results varied: there were good results in art and design, English literature, mathematics and PE.

12. Overall attainment in English is broadly in line with national expectations and sometimes better. This is reflected in recent results in KS3 SATs and GCSE. There is a similar pattern of attainment in lessons. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory overall. While a minority of students in KS3 have some difficulties with reading, most are competent readers and many in higher sets at both key stages have a good level of comprehension. Writing skills show the widest variation in standards, with the more able producing fluent written work but weaker students rarely developing their ideas at length and with their standard of accuracy, including spelling, often poor.

13. Standards in mathematics are satisfactory. Recent results at KS3 have been about the national average. GCSE results have generally been above the national average, except in 1998. Standards in lessons in KS4 are significantly better than those in KS3 although Y10 is weaker than Y11. General numeracy skills are also satisfactory. There is evidence of good use of data presentation and graphic skills across the school. Many students use calculators whenever possible but few routinely use estimation to check results, and there are some weaknesses in subtraction, fractions and estimation.

14. In science in KS3 the work observed in lessons, in students' books, and in discussion showed attainment in line with national averages. This was reflected in KS3 SATs until 1998. In 1999 results in SATs were below the national average though teacher assessments, which include an assessment of experimental and investigative science, were about the national average. In KS4 the overall range of attainment matches national averages. This is reflected in recent GCSE results which were around the national average in 1998 and above average in all science examinations in 1999.

15. Over several years the school has built up a reliable database from intake testing and KS2 SATs, plus regular teacher assessments by subject and external examination results. The data is built into a comprehensive student tracking system which is used as a basis for identifying under-performing students and for the academic tutoring system. The data is collated centrally and includes, for example, an assessment of the value added during KS3. This information is circulated to tutors and is shared with students and parents in tutor interviews. Overall targets are set in areas identified by individual subject teachers. Introducing the system has been a significant investment in time and resources for the school and it is already showing some benefit. Overall targets are useful but could be made more specific. Further use of the data in some subjects and by individual teachers would help to improve short-term targeting and the progress of individual students.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

16. Most students show interest in their work and can sustain their concentration throughout lessons. As students progress through the school they begin to develop independent learning skills. This was observed particularly in Y11 and the sixth form but in earlier years few students take responsibility for moving on to the next task in class or for extended study outside lessons. Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are nearly always at least satisfactory and often good. An exception to this is in Y7 where inspectors judged the students' response to be unsatisfactory in one lesson in five. This is probably due to the fact that the inspection took place in the first half of the autumn term before all students had settled into the routines of the school. Occasionally, unsatisfactory attitudes are also displayed within some lower ability sets at KS3 and by some students in Y10.

17. Behaviour within classrooms and around the school is mostly satisfactory to good. Where it is not so it is usually attributable to a minority of disaffected students and sometimes linked to ineffective classroom management or unimaginative teaching. Exclusions are high; both permanent and fixed term exclusions are much higher than the national average although almost a quarter of the fixed term, and half of the permanent, relate to students admitted from other schools, with a history of alienated behaviour. There is no evidence that bullying is a serious problem at the school. Most parents believed that the school achieves high standards of behaviour and, with few exceptions, inspectors endorse this opinion.

18. Students are usually polite, courteous and friendly to adult visitors. Relationships between students and staff and among students are positive. Students treat equipment and materials with care and show respect for property. There is little or no graffiti although the habit of treading gum into carpets indicates a lack of respect by some. There is good collaboration in pairs and in small groups at all levels in the school.

19. In the two senior years students readily accept the many opportunities to demonstrate initiative and responsibility. Examples of this are involvement with the Code of Conduct, chairing the school council, helping younger students with paired reading, and a *buddy* system, and video production by the GNVQ drama group. Sixth form students showing responsibility is evident both within and outside the classroom. Younger students do demonstrate responsibility, for example, helping in the library, in community projects or charitable activities, but this is much more common outside the classroom than in lessons, where opportunities are more limited.

20. The findings of this inspection mirror the brief description of this aspect in the previous report. Behaviour and relationships continue to be mainly positive; some behaviour continues to be challenging. Evidence suggests that there may be more acceptance of responsibility than before, especially in the sixth form.

Attendance

21. Attendance levels are, and have been for some years, higher than the national average. In the current year attendance has fallen but remains at a satisfactory level. There is, at present, no particular year group with a poor attendance record. This achievement is despite the admission from other schools of a number of students with serious attendance problems. Registrations are properly conducted but some registers are not completed as legally required. A few others are not totalled frequently enough to allow easy compilation of attendance data for monitoring purposes.

22. Punctuality to school is satisfactory except in Y11, where 10% lateness was recorded on one day of the inspection. Punctuality to lessons is also satisfactory given that students frequently have to move long distances between lessons.

23. Since the previous inspection attendances have improved from satisfactory to good. Variation between year groups has been considerably reduced. Only one class can now be said to record attendances of less than 90% "repeatedly." Registers still do not all comply with statutory requirements.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

24. Overall 91% of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better; 59% was good or better; 21% was very good or better; 9% was unsatisfactory. The overall proportions of good and very good teaching are high. In KS3, 50% of the lessons were good or better; 15% unsatisfactory. In KS4, 69% of the teaching was good or better; 6% unsatisfactory. In the sixth form 53% of the teaching was good or better; 3% unsatisfactory. There were examples of good teaching in all areas of the curriculum but occasional unsatisfactory teaching in all subjects except DT, history, music, RE, business studies and drama. There were examples of very good teaching in all subjects except modern foreign languages and RE. Teaching was most effective in DT, history, music and drama, plus art at KS4 and in the sixth form, geography, mathematics and science in KS4. Teaching was least effective in KS3 in mathematics, modern language and PE.

25. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, though because of the size of the school a few have to teach outside their specialisms. A significant proportion of the unsatisfactory teaching was by non-specialist or part-time staff. Most teachers manage their classrooms well and have clear expectations of their students' behaviour. Most teachers use a range of teaching styles and have appropriate expectations of students, but the pace of a minority of classes is too slow and not enough teachers use strategies and materials matched to the range of needs of students in their classes. Teachers' schemes of work vary, with some good examples but others insufficiently detailed. There are clear aims to most lessons but detailed lesson planning does not always include clear lesson objectives. The best lessons start crisply, with a check on homework, a recap of previous work, and a register of students. Homework is often set early in the lesson and this helps students to prepare and target their learning. There is often a specific shared definition of the lesson objectives; activities are well chosen and well structured; and the pace of lessons is good with activities frequently changed to sustain interest. Students are involved throughout the lessons with regular discussion and questioning and there is constant checking to ensure the progress of individuals. At the end of the lesson a review is used to consolidate learning and to point to future work.

26. Teaching seen in the Speech and Language Resource was always good and sometimes very good. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of the students. They focus on curriculum areas and on communication skills, and teachers are very aware of the strategies required to develop students' language skills appropriately. They do this both in discrete communications lessons and within the curriculum. Students are well supported by both speech and language therapists, who sometimes lead whole group sessions, and by learning support assistants. Staff from the resource provide very effective support to students in mainstream lessons.

27. Teaching of students with SEN in different curriculum areas is very variable. Staff are aware of those students who have SEN through the SEN register. IEPs were put in place for all relevant students last year but these are all being reviewed as part of the interim assessment procedure and no up-to-date IEPs were available at the time of the inspection. The use made of the SEN information is inconsistent. In some lessons there is planning to take account of the needs of these students and work is appropriately differentiated. In DT there is some negotiation of targets and the science department is developing more focused work to meet individual needs. Some departments, such as history, provide extension work for the more able, but do not fully address the needs of lower attainers. However, in most curriculum areas there is insufficient focus on individual needs. Some teachers tend to plan

generally for SEN, but do not have a full understanding of differentiation. Others rely too heavily on the setting of students to provide the necessary degree of differentiation. In spite of setting in most subjects each class contains a significant range of ability and prior experience. Not all teachers are well equipped to support some students for whom English is an additional language. Generally teachers have paid too little attention in their planning to the different needs of students. In some cases lower attaining students are given additional support and this enables them to make satisfactory progress. In English considerable effort has been put into choosing appropriate texts and methodology to boost boys' success. In spite of recent efforts to support more able students, challenge for students at the upper end of the ability range is variable.

28. Additional support for students is provided in different ways. Some support teachers work with individuals or small groups of students who are taken out of lessons to focus on specific skills. A number of small group sessions were seen during the inspection. These were well planned and delivered; the students responded well and made satisfactory progress. Learning Support staff also provide extra help to students by running the THRASS (Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills) scheme. Sessions seen during the inspection were satisfactory, but effectiveness is limited by the fact that no member of staff has been able to attend a THRASS training course. A number of learning support assistants provide support in classes, and much that was seen during the inspection was well focused on the needs of the students in the class. However, many of the learning support assistants rely mainly on information from the Head of Learning Support about how to meet the needs of students, and are not often involved in planning lessons with curriculum staff. In some cases they are becoming more involved, for example, in working with science staff to develop materials. A very positive feature of the work of all learning support assistants in the school is that they work effectively to support the inclusion of students, by focusing initially on the needs of named students, but also by offering help to other students when this is appropriate. The Head of Learning Support and a teacher from the Speech and Language Resource meet regularly to plan the best use of support staff and to ensure that no class is over supported.

29. There are examples of excellent teaching in music, history, art, science and drama. For example:

A Y11 science class on genetic engineering used rôle play and debate to ensure excellent learning about the issues around genetically modified foods and also the principles of genetic modification. The teacher used excellent knowledge of the GM arguments to create rôle cards. There was excellent management of the debate, with very high expectations of the level of discussion. The method used was totally appropriate to this higher attaining group. Very good simple prompt sheets were used and the lesson finished with a very good review of the debate and a relevant evaluative homework set.

A Y9 history class focused on the causes of stalemate on the Western Front. Students were enabled to make very good progress in developing skills of source analysis. The lesson aims were put on the blackboard and a register was taken quickly and books distributed. An overhead projector was used to compare two sources for usefulness and reliability. There was good support from a framework sheet on testing sources. The teacher had very high expectations and showed examples on their overhead transparency of writing which illustrated higher grade GCSE work. There was good whole class discussion of a source from an old history book and also of a photograph. The teacher drove very good development of sophisticated views of bias and shifted detail of the planned lesson in order to maximise the gains in student understanding. Excellent links were made with

students' earlier work on war and the class was challenged to think about the usefulness of sources in an excellent analytical conclusion.

A music lesson with another Y9 class was based on class and group work in African drumming in which students used their own notation and syncopated rhythms to develop knowledge of African music forms. The lesson had sharp planning without a minute wasted and brisk and excellent student management. Expectations were very high and the teacher encouraged critical appraisal through listening to other performances, continually evaluating their work and insisting on improvements. Assessment was undertaken for group performance and students also gained skills in close listening.

An A-level critical studies assignment in art focused on individual presentations of chosen areas of study using slides and videos. The lesson had clear aims which were shared with the group. It was very well planned and resources were appropriate and readily available. The working environment was good and visually rich. The teacher had excellent relationships and knowledge of the group. There was supportive and analytical criticism of the presentations and effective use of questioning and answers. Very good subject knowledge was shown and the teacher encouraged effective contributions from the group. The whole lesson was well paced, with high expectations of presentation and research so students made good progress.

30. Most teachers give the students appropriate feedback on their work in class. There are examples of good questioning and oral feedback to students though this strategy could be developed by many teachers. Oral feedback is particularly good in art and music. The quantity and quality of homework set is a little variable with some cases where higher attaining students find that the tasks given are too simple and can be completed at school. There are regular examples of good marking with helpful constructive comments and rigorous and accurate marking of written work, particularly in geography, history, DT and music. However, there are also a few examples of inaccurate marking, comments which are too generous and in more cases marking without comment as to how work could be improved.

31. Over the last few years there has been a lot of focus on improving teaching in staff professional development days. A system of monitoring themes through discussion with middle managers and some classroom observation was introduced in 1998 and from this year a more formal monitoring procedure based substantially on classroom observation is being introduced. In 1997 the staff appraisal process was moved on to an annual review cycle, the outcomes of which set priorities for the next year's professional development programmes. The more systematic monitoring procedures are not yet embedded into the school and there is no teaching and learning policy and no detailed monitoring policy. Managers at all levels should be involved in more frequent monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching and its impact on standards.

32. There are examples of very good teaching in most curriculum areas and this good practice could be used more systematically to improve the overall quality of delivery. There is also some unsatisfactory teaching and it is essential that this is identified rapidly and that managers work together with the teachers to eliminate it. Coupled with more rigorous monitoring and feedback, further staff development is required on curriculum and lesson planning, plus teaching styles and strategies for meeting the different needs of all students within each class.

The curriculum and assessment

33. The curriculum provided in KS3 is generally broad and balanced with all students studying the full range of National Curriculum subjects as well as RE and *Lifeskills*. Provision for modern languages is generous although some students in top sets study two languages in the time allocated for one. IT is taught as part of DT but coverage is insufficient to fulfil statutory requirements. National Curriculum requirements for using IT in English, mathematics and DT are not currently met, although the situation is improving. A more flexible timetable structure, possibly over ten days, could create sufficient space for IT and for other courses such as drama, which could have a positive impact on behaviour, motivation and student development.

34. In KS4 all students continue with English, mathematics, balanced science (leading to one, two or three GCSEs), DT, RE, a modern foreign language, PE and *Lifeskills*. Students may choose one further subject from the other National Curriculum subjects plus drama, business, and child development. Students studying single science may choose two further subjects. Provision for IT again does not meet National Curriculum requirements. All KS4 courses are based on GCSEs. No support option is offered to students in Y10 and Y11 so that all students have to study the full range of subjects until after mock GCSEs, when some may reduce the number of subjects being taken. A few students take a Certificate of Achievement in English and French, but apart from these there is no alternative to GCSE examinations. This provides too great a load for some students with SEN. There is a need to widen choice and enhance motivation in KS4 by introducing more vocational provision, for example, GNVQ part 1 or Key Skills accreditation.

35. The sixth form offers a good range of A-levels including all National Curriculum subjects plus sociology, photography, economics, computer studies, and business studies. Some groups are very small and in some cases Y12 and Y13 are taught together. GNVQ in leisure and tourism is offered at intermediate and advanced level, and GNVQ in performing arts at advanced level. There is some twilight provision for students who wish to re-sit GCSE but little else to attract students with lower GCSE grades to stay on. All students are also taught general studies at AS level. This covers some aspects of RE, but the RE provision should be increased. All students also take a *Lifeskills* programme and recreational games/PE. The educational and economic viability of some small groups should be reviewed, particularly since reducing student numbers will make the situation worse. There is room for more flexibility in the way in which some courses are delivered. Discussions have begun with other local schools to set up consortium arrangements in response to forthcoming DfEE requirements for 16-19 education.

36. All students are placed in ability sets after the autumn half term of Y7, except for PE and DT. The setting makes a generally positive contribution to teaching and learning in most subjects although it does not eliminate the need for differentiation. Setting is less appropriate, for example, where RE is linked to sets in mathematics and where setting by attainment in one subject prevents mixed ability grouping in subjects such as art and music.

37. Mainstream students with SEN have access to the whole curriculum, except where they are withdrawn from lessons for individual or group work. This withdrawal is carefully planned, and is targeted appropriately during English lessons. However, some students do miss individual subjects for a term at a time, which can make return to mainstream lessons difficult.

38. All students in the Speech and Language Resource are disapplied from modern foreign languages. Subjects such as art, music and PE are studied in the mainstream, together with

DT and science after the first part of Y7. Other subjects are taught in the resource centre, with opportunities for individual students to join in mainstream lessons where this is felt to be appropriate. In addition to National Curriculum courses students focus on the development of speech and language and on social skills. The first cohort of students has now reached Y11, and these are being offered a range of accredited courses, including GCSE, Certificate of Achievement, and the Youth Award. The school hopes to be able to offer continued support next year by extending the work of the Resource into the sixth form and a proposal is currently being considered by the LEA.

39. Departmental schemes of work vary in quality although there are good, fully developed schemes in DT, history, geography and art. Nearly all schemes are fully compliant with requirements for coverage of the National Curriculum, except for IT in several subjects. The KS3 scheme in science is not yet well matched to the National Curriculum and the scheme in IT needs considerable further development. Other schemes need more detail and guidance on teaching and learning and strategies for ensuring that work is well matched to students' needs. Schemes in English, mathematics, French, history and geography refer to textbooks, case studies, or resources which will develop pupils' understanding of equal opportunities. Procedures for monitoring curriculum delivery and schemes of work need strengthening to ensure compliance with policy and quality standards.

40. Homework is generally set in accordance with the school's requirements and is monitored regularly by form tutors. The quality of homework overall is satisfactory overall and is making a good contribution to learning in most subjects. However, there are some cases where higher attaining students find that the tasks given are too simple and can be completed at school. Students mostly understand the marking system which is in general use throughout the school, and in KS4 the marking is often linked to GCSE grades. Particularly good marking practice can be seen in art, DT, geography, history, and music, where very good formative feedback is often given both in writing and orally. Marking is less consistent in English and mathematics, and there are a few examples of inaccurate marking, comments which are too generous, and more generally marking without comment as to how work could be improved.

41. Assessment has been considerably strengthened since the inspection in 1995. The school assessment policy provides a good framework for practice throughout the school. Regular testing and end of year examinations are established across most subjects and, together with baseline national CATs tests, SATs results, and GCSE grades, provide data that tracks individual students' progress and enables value added to be demonstrated. Interim assessments on a termly basis are used by tutors to give an overview of current progress, and review meetings with students and parents lead to generic target setting. The quality of these targets is variable at present and many are not yet specific enough to be evaluated, but the system is a good basis for development. School policy encourages self-assessment and good practice is developing in English, DT, geography and history. Elsewhere self-assessment is not yet well understood as being part of ongoing teaching and learning and is mainly administered as a summative activity, for example, at the end of term. Few departments regularly set specific short-term subject targets for students.

42. Extra-curricular provision is particularly good and enables a high proportion of the students to participate. Activities include a wide range of clubs and sporting activities, quizzes, competitions, business links, visits, outings and field trips. Drama and music feature widely in choirs, bands and school productions. There is an extensive range of PE and sporting activities, with basketball, trampolining and netball clubs during each day plus a good number of after school clubs and teams covering a wide range of sports. The school is also the location for a wide range of community activities which are attended by students, including scouts, guides, various clubs, and adult education classes.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

43. This is a voluntary controlled school and, therefore, collective worship is inspected separately and does not form part of the references to spiritual development in this report.

44. As at the last inspection the school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. The aims of the school state that each student should be given the opportunity to develop a faith and a moral code by which to live; to learn to respect the beliefs of others; and to develop a sense of personal worth and responsibility for the created world. Consideration has been given to ways in which these developments can be promoted, and some departments are including suggestions in their handbooks, although there is not a whole school policy on this. The school leadership has a clear view of the importance of this, and there were favourable comments made by parents about this aspect of the school's provision.

45. The whole ethos of the school is one which supports the spiritual development of students, providing an inclusive atmosphere in which all students are valued. Students are encouraged to recognise and value worth in each individual and to build up relationships with one another. Students are helped to develop self-confidence and self esteem. Students are encouraged to respect other people's beliefs and to see the importance of values by which to live. In times of difficulty all members of the community are supportive of one another. A room in the school is set aside as a Chaplaincy (there is no chaplain at present). This is seen as part of the pastoral provision of the school and as supporting spiritual development. Students are given opportunities to explore and express their beliefs and have a quiet space in which to reflect and to pray. There is not always clarity about ways in which spiritual development can be encouraged through the curriculum, but some good examples were noted during the inspection. In RE students are given opportunities to talk about their own beliefs and explain them to others. In English students look at poetry on different aspects of life and death; they reflect on their own lives and experiences. Students in Y9 had written some sensitive and thoughtful poetry about Kosovo. In drama GCSE students produce whole class improvisations on the theme of war, using music and movement to create atmosphere. GNVQ students create a service in the local church on the theme of Christmas.

46. The school supports a clear moral basis of right and wrong. Staff set a good example to students who are encouraged to treat others with courtesy, respect and care. Teachers show students that their ideas are valued. The school code of conduct and expectations of classroom behaviour are printed in homework diaries and displayed on the walls of classrooms. The behaviour policy encourages the development of self-discipline. There is a policy against bullying and students indicate that there is little bullying, and any which occurs is swiftly dealt with. There are opportunities in the context of RE to reflect on moral concepts. There is a *Lifeskills* programme which is designed to prepare students for all areas of life and to encourage self-reliance, self-discipline and self-respect, which again provides opportunities to deal with issues such as honesty, human rights, fairness and justice, peer pressure and bullying. In history students participate in empathy work, trying to look at the motives of historical characters. In science a debate of very high calibre on the subject of genetic engineering was seen. Many moral issues are discussed in English, some arising from literature being studied. In drama students explore moral attitudes through role-play. GNVQ students undertake projects with strong moral themes, for example, producing a video on drink driving.

47. As part of their social development students are encouraged to act responsibly as members of the school and the wider community. Students generally have good relationships with each other and with adults in the school. Students are encouraged to work co-operatively,

both in lessons and in other activities, and examples of this were seen in students working in pairs and groups in areas such as music and *Lifeskills*. In drama an emphasis on group improvisations for exams develops social skills and a sense of responsibility. Students on the GNVQ course take an increasing responsibility for their own learning, contribute to group projects, and involve younger students in drama clubs and student productions. They have had a major role in staging an arts festival. There is a School Council which is attended by two students from each class and which gives students an opportunity to express their views on issues related to school life. In the sixth form students volunteer to help in school with paired reading and with the library. Some were involved in the summer literacy scheme. A number of sixth formers operate as *buddies* to Y7 students, which is much appreciated by these new students. Sixth formers were involved in developing the school's Code of Conduct. Money is raised by students of all year groups for a number of charities, for example, for children's charities, cancer research, Comic Relief and Scope.

48. Cultural awareness is developed in many curriculum areas, such as music and art, and the curriculum is enriched by a wide range of educational visits to places such as galleries, theatres and concerts. In English poetry is given a high profile with poetry writing competitions and displays focused on poetry. In drama students have the opportunity to learn about major dramatists. The GNVQ students link with the Norden Farm arts centre and have had the opportunity of working with professional actors. There are field trips in various areas of the curriculum and trips abroad support the curriculum in French. There is also a wide variety of extra-curricular activities including clubs in a number of curricular areas, such as DT and drama, sports such as basketball, netball, badminton, trampolining and gymnastics, and a wide range of music including bands and choirs. There are opportunities to learn a variety of musical instruments. Students are involved in musicals, concerts and a carol service.

49. The multicultural dimension of society features in some areas of the curriculum. In art there have been opportunities to look at the art of various cultures and in music students have listened to music from different countries. In RE students study the major world religions. In English some of the texts studied help to develop an understanding of different cultures and students are doing an anti-racist project. Displays in areas such as RE, music, art and French include a multicultural, element and resources in different subjects and in the library have some representation of different cultures. History and French use trips to develop cultural insights. However, this aspect is not sufficiently well developed to ensure that all students are aware of this dimension of the society in which they live.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

50. The 1995 inspection report noted that pastoral work was a strength. It reported that the school had good care and guidance which fosters students' development and transition to working life. Pastoral staffing has since been extended through the appointment of year heads. The pastoral system's work is now even stronger and contributes also to the monitoring of academic progress.

51. A senior teacher is responsible for student support and is the named person for child protection. She is responsible for the *Lifeskills* course, behaviour, students' progress, records and attendance, and liaison with parents and external agencies. Regular half termly meetings of school staff and external agency staff are effective in focusing co-ordinated action when students need help. Sixth formers help younger students through a *buddy* system. There is an active school council.

52. Tutors are given a clear remit which covers delivery of the *Lifeskills* programme, monitoring of academic progress, and pastoral care. Homework diaries provide an effective link with parents. Tutors' links with subject teachers need to be defined more clearly to ensure good communication. Tutors know students well and relate well to their groups. There is always someone a student can turn to for help. The system of student monitoring works well and is run by year heads. Tutors report to them when students show signs of social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

53. The *Lifeskills* programme is taught by tutors and managed by year heads. There is an outline curriculum and year heads have freedom to develop the course for their year group. A wide range of external speakers are involved. Students benefit from the commitment of staff delivering the programme. There is need for firm co-ordination across the whole of the school to ensure that the work of tutors, year heads and co-ordinators of citizenship, careers and other aspects produce systematic progression for students.

54. A newly appointed careers co-ordinator delivers the programme for the whole school. In Y7 and Y8 relevant aspects are included in the *Lifeskills* programme. Careers education offers good guidance on careers and unbiased advice on subject options. Students are prepared well for life after school. Counselling on A-level and GNVQ option choices is sound. Relevant work experience is provided in Y11. Parents say that careers advice from school staff and external careers staff is good. They appreciate the positive interest shown by tutors in this aspect of their work.

55. Policies, including those on bullying, drugs and health, provide an effective framework for action. A comprehensive *Pastoral Handbook* provides staff with good advice and relevant information. Arrangements for academic target setting are outlined.

56. Behaviour and discipline continue to be a priority. The school aims to develop self-discipline and mutual respect by reward and encouragement. *Pay back* offers an appropriate opportunity for students to put right neglect of work or misbehaviour. There is a classroom *Code of conduct* and a range of sanctions which includes isolation. Exclusion is used frequently where all other measures have failed. A member of staff has been trained by the police to implement *restorative justice*. This brings victim and transgressor together to effect reconciliation and improved behaviour. Some trial work has been done but wider use should be considered.

57. The school has procedures for monitoring attendance. Office staff phone parents on the first day of absence. Completion of attendance registers is inconsistent. The attendance system is not yet on computer. A more rapid and secure communication system on attendance is required.

58. The Head of Learning Support is working to develop links with curriculum and pastoral staff. IEPs for learning have previously been written by learning support staff, but a new system involving pastoral staff in writing stage 2 IEPs is being developed. The Head of Learning Support will continue to take responsibility for those at stage 3 and above, in liaison with form tutors and support staff. It is planned to review these twice a year, linking to the school's programme of Interim Assessments. Review forms allow for both students and parents to comment, and for new targets to be discussed with students.

59. Pastoral staff take responsibility for students with Emotional and Behavioural difficulties, although there are close links with the Head of Learning Support where students have both behavioural and learning difficulties. However, there are no clear criteria for

identifying students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and some are dealt with via a disciplinary route rather than being transferred to the Code of Practice stages. At present insufficient attention is paid to this aspect of SEN.

60. Positive support is provided to the school by the educational psychologist who visits regularly to assess students and to advise on their needs. He also attends annual reviews whenever this is possible, and links with the Speech and Language Resource centre for students from the LEA. In addition there are useful half termly liaison meetings with the educational psychologist, Education Welfare Officer, and Behaviour Support Team (BST) to give an overview of students who are causing concern and to report back on work with students. There is liaison between the BST and the pastoral staff where emotional and behavioural difficulties are identified. A teacher from the sensory support team visits to advise on students with physical disability and visual impairment.

61. The speech and language therapists in the Speech and Language Resource also provide very good support to students, being involved in teaching, in support in classes both in the resource and in mainstream, and in providing individual therapy.

62. Parents speak very positively about the pastoral work of the school. The care taken over readmission of sick children is praised. The school has actively involved external sources of counselling. In all, pastoral guidance is a strength of the school.

63. There is an effective Health and Safety policy. Staff are aware of procedures but some students are not. Equipment, for example, fire extinguishers is regularly checked. Alternative fire exits are required in science, but otherwise there are no significant health and safety issues.

Partnership with parents and the community

64. The great majority of parents is very supportive of the school although their direct involvement is limited. Attendance at school activities is frequently low, for example, at the arts festival and the pre-inspection meeting. A few parents give valuable help in the Library, Research Centre, which helps to keep it open. There is a School Association which raises funds for the school. The school makes considerable attempts to involve parents via, for example, the reporting system, contact by pastoral staff, and evening meetings on school issues. Homework diaries are a useful means of communication between parents and the school. Returns of the parental questionnaire were low but showed that most parents felt the school is approachable and encourages involvement. Inspectors agree with these views. The school is trying to build further contact with the introduction of a joint school and governors' marketing group.

65. Links with the parents of students with SEN are being developed. Parents of students with statements of SEN attend annual reviews and are asked to contribute their views in writing as well as at the meeting. The parents of students at other stages of the Code of Practice receive copies of the IEPs and can arrange to discuss these if they wish. Some parents attend the Individual Education Plan reviews. The Speech and Language Resource holds parents' evenings at the same time as the rest of the school so that parents can visit the resource at the same time as talking to subject teachers. Parents also attend for annual reviews. All reviews follow statutory guidelines, as do transition reviews.

66. Information provided for parents is good. A newsletter and other letters provide data about school issues and activities. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to

parents provide useful information and meet statutory requirements. There are full and interim reports on progress and two consultation meetings each year. These reports give good information about actual and predicted levels of achievement and personal development and are well timed to allow parents to assist with any necessary corrective action. In some subjects there is a description of the work covered. There is helpful diagnosis of weaknesses although identified areas for improvement do not include measurable improvement targets. There is good communication with parents concerning the social development of students, including any attendance or behavioural problems.

67. The school has strong links with the community, many of which contribute well to students' education. Lettings, both of excess space and of the sports facilities, bring in useful income. Some 2000 members of the community use the school's facilities each week. The local area is used for field trips and foreign visits feature in the languages, geography and vocational curricula. Residential visits include a teambuilding week for Y11 at an outdoor training centre in Cumbria. Several visiting speakers enhance students' learning. Liaison with external agencies is good, particularly in the areas of pastoral support and careers guidance. Work experience for Y10 students is well organised. Students are encouraged to support charities. Among others, links with *Northern Telecom (NORTEL)* and the nearby *Norden Farm Arts Centre* make especially valuable contributions to standards of attainment and to personal development.

NORTEL provides a governor for the school and engineers from the company have linked with teachers to help develop the use of ICT. The company provided engineers and advice to manage the development of a good ICT network infrastructure. Two students from the school presented projects at a recent royal opening of a new building at the company.

The Norden Farm Arts Centre is being developed near the school. When complete, it will have a 225 seat and a 100 seat theatre plus a gallery and a multimedia centre. Good collaboration has developed over the past few years and the headteacher is now a trustee of the centre. Students have taken part in various arts education projects including some music and drama, for example, a jazz project and several drama productions. For the past three years lower sixth performing arts students have been involved in a video documentary project. They have been given professional video training, have filmed at various times through the year, and have then edited an annual episode for public screening. During recent building the school provided alternative accommodation which enabled a project involving several professional actors to go ahead.

68. The previous inspection reported that community links were a strength of the school and that parental support was high though involvement was limited. This remains the overall situation, though there have been further developments in links with industry and the arts, the use of school facilities by outside organisations and individuals, and in reporting progress to parents.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

69. The senior management team consists of the headteacher and four senior teachers. A deputy headteacher is currently on long-term secondment to the *Tesco Millennium Project* but is due to return in January 2000. The headteacher was appointed to the school six years ago.

Between them the other four members of the senior management team have an average of 17 years' experience in the school. They know each other and the staff well and work effectively as a team. The headteacher provides effective leadership for the school based on clear values. Each of the senior managers has a clear rôle and together they cover all areas of school management except finance and premises, which are the responsibility of a non-teaching manager.

70. The governing body has recently been restructured and its membership includes a good range of professional input. For example, there is a former finance director, a project manager, a structural engineer, a personnel manager, and a marketing manager. There are three former headteachers, three councillors, and four governors representing of the Church of England. The chair of the governing body provides strong leadership for the governors and also chairs the governors' policy committee which consists of the vice-chairman, the headteacher, and the committee chairs. He also chairs the finance committee. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive and are a very positive influence on leadership and management. The governing body committees are well informed by the school senior managers. The committee meetings have recently been reordered so that confidential information is taken first as a timed part of the meeting, then the main meeting is taken second, and a final session involves the headteacher and any other teachers from the school and focuses on good news.

71. The governing body has appropriate standing orders and has produced policies in most relevant areas. It reviews academic results and updates the school improvement plan each autumn. It is involved at an early stage in consideration of curriculum and teaching staff structures for the next academic year, and in the spring term tackles the creation of the budget for the next financial year. In the past link governors have been appointed to work with key senior and middle managers in the school but this rôle has become less strong and is due to be relaunched. There is a governor with responsibility for SEN. She liaises closely with both the Head of Learning Support and the Head of the Speech and Language Resource. However, she does not monitor SEN provision on behalf of the governors, nor does she provide regular feedback to the governing body. Neither the SEN policy nor the governors' annual report to parents meet all the criteria laid down in the Code of Practice and in recent legislation. The chair of governors has an impressive grasp of issues at the school and has recently produced a very useful budget strategy for the years to 2001 reflecting difficulties in current and future budgeting. He has also recently produced a paper for the finance committee setting out a strategy for benchmarking the financial performance of the school with reference to a series of key indicators.

72. Below the senior management team the school structure is fairly straightforward. Generally the academic organisation is based on departments and the pastoral structure on heads of year. There are, however, some anomalies: there is no obvious rôle for the seconded deputy head to return to; several individuals have significant responsibility allowances but more limited managerial rôles; several others have multiple responsibilities. Another anomaly is that both the head of mathematics and the head of learning support are part-time (0.8) appointments. The school should review and restructure management to

reduce inefficiency and clarify rôles. Some of the managers are operating very effectively and almost all are satisfactory. However, they have had insufficient training for their managerial rôles and their performance could be strengthened, particularly in the areas of improvement planning, monitoring and feedback.

73. The Head of Learning Support has been in post for a year and has worked hard to develop systems in line with the Code of Practice, and to enable staff to meet the needs of students with SEN. The SEN register is circulated to all staff annually, and regular updates are given at staff meetings and in the staff bulletin. IEPs have been developed and a new system is being instituted to involve pastoral staff more in the writing of these. There is good use made of support teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) to meet the needs of statemented students and, wherever possible, of students at earlier stages of SEN, although there are examples of groups where support is unavailable. The Head of Learning Support has not yet had the opportunity to work alongside colleagues to help with strategies for meeting the needs of students with SEN in mainstream classes.

74. The Speech and Language Resource is managed very effectively to meet the needs of the students and to make the provision as inclusive as possible. IEPs are written for students, and ways are being developed of linking these with the mainstream curriculum. Careful plans are made for the inclusion of students into mainstream lessons wherever appropriate. All students belong to a tutor group and have the opportunity of spending social times with mainstream friends. The Speech and Language Resource staff liaise closely with mainstream teachers, although the amount of liaison varies from subject to subject. Where students are taught a subject in mainstream Speech and Language Resource staff follow the schemes of work for other subjects, at a level appropriate for the students. There are close links with some departments, such as mathematics, but mainstream staff are not always aware of the work being done in the Resource. Changes in staffing in the school have meant that developing ways of working has sometimes been difficult. Staff in the resource provide in-service training (INSET) and information for staff new to the school. They have also provided INSET to the whole staff, although full use has not always been made of their specific skills in SEN.

75. Communication within the school is not a major problem, with only 32 full-time and 11 part-time staff. However, the site is large and there is no daily briefing so much of the school operation depends on custom and practice. This is effective and day-to-day operation of the school is smooth. However, there are cases where middle managers have been frustrated when their suggestions for improvement have not got through for open discussion or where decisions from the senior management team have been implemented rather than discussed. School documentation is satisfactory. The pastoral handbook is comprehensive though the staff handbook (called the timetable booklet) is less full. Governors' policies all follow a common and fairly succinct format and cover most areas, though there is no teaching and learning or monitoring policy. Departmental handbooks follow a standard format and there have been attempts to standardise documentation in other areas.

76. The school improvement plan includes descriptions of whole school targets. These are reflected primarily through specific targets in most subject plans. For each subject target there is a process target for what needs to be done and a listing of relevant resources. For each year group each subject is set specific outcome targets and processes which will support these, together with responsibilities and resources. The format used for some of the development plans, for example RE, is slightly different (and slightly better in this case). As well as the departmental targets there is a calendar of consultation for the next year's improvement planning cycle and a listing of the line management structure. The planning process is good and shows involvement of staff at all levels and of governors. The plan itself is satisfactory but could be improved by making it more rigorous. For example, there is good

planning from some departments but this is inconsistent. The lack of specific whole school targets and success criteria means that monitoring and evaluation is more difficult, and improvement may not be secured. There is a need for a systematic professional development plan. The longer-term strategic plan needs to be linked into the annual school improvement plan in order to drive the necessary changes at school level, for example, in response to the key issues of this report.

77. In the past couple of years senior managers and heads of department have become more involved in lesson observation. However, the new monitoring systems are not yet embedded and practice is variable with insufficient monitoring in most areas. There needs to be more training for managers at all levels in monitoring and feedback, not only of classroom teaching but of other processes including assessment. More regular and rigorous monitoring of classrooms, assessment, and policy implementation will be necessary to secure further improvement in standards of attainment.

78. The school has maintained almost all of the strengths which were identified in the inspection in 1995 and has made significant progress on addressing each of the five key issues. For example, the quality of teaching in music was unsatisfactory in 1995; it is now very good. Across the school the proportion of good or better teaching has increased to 59%. The Speech and Language Resource has been developed. The school has achieved the *Sportsmark* award. Many of its systems and procedures have been strengthened, including those for assessment of students. Statutory assessment and GCSE results have improved. For example, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE higher grades (A* to C) has increased from 42% in 1995 to 55% in 1999. The number of students taking A-levels has increased from 16 in 1995 to 57 in 1999 and the level of results maintained. Attendance has increased from 90% in 1995 to 94% in 1999. Overall, improvement has been good.

79. Leadership and management are generally good. The school improvement planning process has been strengthened but the plan itself would benefit from being made more rigorous. Since 1995 the number of students has reduced from 694 to 545 and this has put strain on school finances. Provided the budget can be brought quickly into balance, the school is well placed for further improvement.

80. The school is meeting almost all of its statutory requirements but exceptions are National Curriculum requirements in ICT, both as a subject and within other subjects. Alternative fire exits are required in science but otherwise there are no significant health and safety issues. Some issues in the SEN provision are identified in paragraph 71.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

81. The school has sufficient teachers with appropriate qualifications and experience. In the main staff are deployed effectively according to their qualifications, although sometimes because of the size of the school staff teach outside their specialist areas. Teachers working with students with SEN, both in the mainstream and in the Speech and Language Resource, are suitably qualified and/or experienced for the work. There have been a large number of changes to staff since the previous inspection. In the past two years 24.5 full time equivalent (FTE) staff have been appointed and 25.5 have left. The number of students in the school has reduced from 694 to 545. At the time of the last inspection the pupil:teacher ratio (PTR) was given as 15.9:1 and the contact ratio as 77%. For this inspection the PTR is 14.3:1 and the contact ratio 76%. The current PTR is well below the national average. One of the main

reasons for the reduced PTR is a significant increase in students with SEN, including the opening of the Speech and Language Resource. The number of students having statements of SEN has risen from 11 in 1995 to 46 in 1999 (including 26 in the Resource). Even so, the PTR is low and cannot be sustained at this level.

82. In addition to seven SEN assistants (and one part-time assistant funded for English as an additional language) there are six other education support staff and 11 administrative and clerical staff. The number of administrative and clerical staff is very high for the size of the school, though there is no Library, Research Centre manager. The non-teaching staff contribute well to the school but the current budget will not allow non-teaching support staff to be sustained at this level.

83. Staffing matters are dealt with by the full governing body which meets twice each term. The staffing policies and procedures are based mainly on local education authority model policies. All of the senior management team are involved with governors and teachers in most staff appointments. There is a staff handbook which contains some useful procedures and staffing information, and there is a fuller pastoral handbook.

84. One of the senior teachers is designated as responsible for staffing matters. She controls the standards fund budget and ensures that staff development is linked to the school improvement plan and to subject development plans. The systems for staff development are satisfactory and include some evaluation of the effectiveness of programmes. Each member of staff has an annual individual review, managed through heads of subject, and this triggers requests for specific professional development. There is a well-structured programme for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and other new staff are linked as appropriate into this. With an increase in the number of NQTs a two-day conference was run in July and there was a one-day conference for other new starters. A mentor is identified for each NQT. Whole school staff development days are generally linked with major school improvement targets. Some managers have studied for national vocational qualifications (NVQ) including level 5 modules in strategic target setting. Other managers are involved in the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). There has been some training in lesson observation and feedback. In addition to specific in-service training there have been cases of coaching, mentoring, peer observation, and extended monitoring. There have also been some systematic attempts to develop individuals on the job. Non-teaching staff are properly involved in annual individual reviews and are included in staff development programmes. None of the learning support assistants is qualified in SEN, but those in mainstream have received some INSET from the Head of Learning Support, while those in the Speech and Language Resource have had training in the resource, and attended a number of training days on speech and language.

85. There are job descriptions, mainly in generic form, for all staff though these do not highlight key responsibilities and priorities. Appraisal was introduced some years ago, based on the LEA scheme, but was replaced about three years ago by an annual system of individual reviews. The processes involved are mainly in line with new requirements. The school has investigated the potential of Investors in People and has aligned its systems with IIP requirements. Assessment for IIP accreditation is planned for spring 2000. Generally the professional development systems and structures are sound. There is, however, a need for a systematic professional development plan which links with the school improvement plan and includes provision:

- for managers at all levels to support them in their management rôle and to help ensure consistent implementation of policies and improved standards
- for all staff on teaching styles and strategies for meeting the different needs of all students

- within each class
- and for all staff to enhance their ICT skills, knowledge and understanding.

Accommodation

86. The school occupies a very large site and can accommodate many more students than are currently on roll. This has a negative impact on cost as maintenance, utilities and cleaning expense, is incurred without sufficient compensating income. The school has tackled this situation well, renting out surplus space to external organisations, and plans are in hand to extend this. The school's facilities are well used by the community; about 2000 people each week pass through its gates. The benefits of the size of the school include virtually all subjects being taught in suites of rooms and good departmental office and storage areas. Although a recent local authority survey has identified many areas requiring improvement few of these directly affect the standards of attainment achieved by students. Budgetary constraints are restricting maintenance work largely to health and safety issues. Some laboratories need refurbishment and the technology area, already improved since the previous inspection, still needs further upgrading. The Library, Research Centre is too small to allow classes and private research to take place at the same time and there is a shortage of storage, administrative and office space within the Centre. Classrooms are large enough to allow a range of teaching methods to be employed and display work in classes and public areas enhance the learning environment. There is accommodation set aside for the SEN department, with teaching and office space. The Speech and Language Resource has very good accommodation with teaching rooms, therapy rooms and offices. The Speech and Language Resource is well resourced and the SEN department is developing its resources. The Resource and the department work together to share resources where this is appropriate.

87. The school has made considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The library has now been re-opened, there has been major refurbishment within the science and technology areas, and the quality of displays is much improved. Other good features of the accommodation have been maintained, while further work remains to be done on science and technology provision and general redecoration.

Learning resources

88. The Library, Research Centre has recently been re-opened and is now providing a useful resource for students. The stock of books is up-to-date and, from a low base, is now almost at the recommended level of books per student. It is only due to a very enthusiastic co-ordinator and practical help from students and volunteer parents that it maintains reasonable opening hours and a sound level of service. The centre suffers from the lack of a full-time librarian or library assistant; this limits student access to sixty per cent of planned opening hours, causes operational inefficiencies for those wishing to reserve whole-class time or make spontaneous use of the facility, and results in some usage which is unsupervised by any adult. There is positive liaison with departments and the centre is playing a leading role in the literacy project. This is a significant improvement on the situation at the previous inspection. The school needs to build upon the excellent work done so far in reinstating this vital resource, by improving student access and aiding the development of their research and reading skills.

89. Since the previous inspection learning resources have been improved. Departmental resources are good in most subjects and annual funding allows curriculum needs to be met. There are some shortages in DT (IT and control technology); art (at post-16); modern languages (authentic audio, video and text resources); and RE (KS3 and post-16).

90.

The number of personal computers (PCs) available for student use is good. The ratio of students:computers is about 5:1 which is significantly better than the national average. Most of the machines are industry compatible PCs. However, the PCs are mostly some years old and cannot use modern industry standard software. They are not networked and there are some difficulties with printing. The communications company *NORTEL* and *The Cable Corporation* have worked to install a good network infrastructure but the PCs across the school need to be connected. Engineers from *NORTEL* have also linked with some teachers to help develop the use of ICT. The school is one of nine involved in the *Ultralab* project with *Anglia Polytechnic University* researching the use of multimedia in schools. Recently installed PCs in the Library, Research Centre have access to the Internet and multi-media. However, those used for IT teaching can support only relatively simple data communications and cannot provide good support for some of the requirements of the IT curriculum beyond KS3. This will require further investment.

The efficiency of the school

91. The chair of governors, who is also chair of the finance committee, plus the headteacher and the finance and premises manager, have a good overview of the main financial issues facing the school. Over the last few years student rolls have reduced and the reduction this year was more than expected. The current budget was initially drawn up with a deficit to enable the current level of staffing to be maintained. To overcome this the school has negotiated a loan of £84,000 from the LEA to be repaid over a five-year period by increased income from letting a discrete area of the school. A sensible strategic financial plan has been drawn up which will enable future budgets to be balanced provided that anticipated enrolments are maintained.

92. The budget is initially drawn up by the headteacher and the finance and premises manager in discussion with the chair of governors. Governors go through the proposed budget in some detail and have also been involved in developing a longer-term budget strategy. The draft budget is mainly based on curriculum need and historical costs, together with requirements from the school improvement plan. Through the year expenditure is effectively monitored and there is regular reconciliation of expenditure against the budget. Each department has a budget plan and gets monthly reports of expenditure and commitment. A full audit was conducted last year and this showed no major issues except for some aspects of inventory control. The school keeps effective control of its finances.

93. The total expenditure last year was £1.715 million, which is almost £3,000 per student. The budgeted expenditure this year is £1.753 million, which, because of reduced student numbers, increases the overall forecast expenditure per student to £3,217. These figures exclude some £90,000 for the Speech and Language Resource which is funded separately through the LEA. Expenditure is very high compared to the average figure for schools with sixth forms outside London. However, several anomalies explain this to some extent. The figures for income and expenditure include items (amounting to about £68,000 last year) for student trips, etc. which would generally be excluded. The school is situated on a large site and has high accommodation costs in spite of its relatively small number of students. The school falls into the Outer London area for staff allowances which increases costs compared to other schools outside London. Some of the additional funding derives from the relatively high number of students with SEN. The school receives money for students on the SEN register on the basis of a formula and specific funding for students with statements. Even after these factors are taken into account, because of the reduced student numbers expenditure this year will be too high. Planned expenditure in future years will be a little above average. There are

some inefficiencies in staffing [see paragraphs 72, 81 and 82] and in the sixth form curriculum [paragraph 35]. There will need to be some further expenditure on ICT, accommodation and learning resources.

94. Progress is good for most students and results have been around the national averages. The school provides very good pastoral support and student development is good. The cost per student is high. Reasons for this include high accommodation costs, staff being paid Outer London allowances, and the high proportion of students with SEN. There are some inefficiencies in staffing and in the sixth form. Despite these, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

95. Overall attainment in English is broadly in line with national expectations, and sometimes better. In 1999 there was a slight drop in the proportion of students gaining Level 5 or above in the KS3 SATs, but the picture over the past three years is generally a positive one, with the average Test score a little above the national average and in line with results from similar schools. Boys' attainment in particular has been consistently above the national average for boys. GCSE results have shown an improving trend since 1996, particularly so in English literature. GCSE English results have remained steadily just above the national average, with a noticeable improvement in 1999. There has been greater fluctuation in the English literature results where the proportion gaining higher grades rose from well below the national average in 1998 to well above in 1999. The results in both subjects for 1999 show a dramatic improvement in boys' attainments, which are now very similar to girls', and well above the national average for boys. The 1999 A-level English results are above the national average and are a considerable improvement on those in 1998 and earlier years.

96. There is a similar pattern of attainment in lessons. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory overall. Most students speak with confidence and usually listen to their teachers, although not always so well to each other. While a minority of students in KS3 have some difficulties with reading most are competent readers and many in higher sets in both key stages have a good level of comprehension. Writing skills show the widest variation in standards. In KS3 the more able produce fluent written work in a range of forms with a good standard of accuracy and mature use of vocabulary. There is some sensitive descriptive writing and lively narrative. In KS4 there is often good original writing: the best shows a high standard of expression, confident use of literary terminology, and some astute insight in response to literature. Weaker students rarely develop their ideas at length and the standard of accuracy, including spelling, is often poor. Most A-level students write well-constructed, detailed essays, expressing themselves with confidence. Weaker students lack secure analytical skills, and though their ideas are frequently interesting and perceptive, their style is sometimes over-colloquial.

97. Most students make at least satisfactory progress over time. In KS3 many improve in their ability to present their point of view, and develop some analytical skills. Weaker students show a distinct improvement through the key stage in standards of presentation, accuracy and expression. Good progress is made by many students with SEN when they are well supported in class, or are in small groups specifically addressing their needs. Good progress was seen in a well-paced lesson with a lower set in Y8: students learned a wide range of technical vocabulary as a result of their teacher's high expectations and energetic approach. In KS4 many make satisfactory progress in response to literature and to the increasing challenge of work at GCSE level. Weaker students are able to use the process of drafting to improve the standard of accuracy of their work. Very good progress was seen in a well-managed lesson on poetry with a Y11 class, where the pace was demanding, the teacher's high expectations were made clear, and the lesson conducted with humour; students gained confidence to express a personal response and showed greater understanding and depth of thought. On a few occasions, poor progress in lessons is linked to poor behaviour. A-level students make good progress over time. Many gain intellectual confidence, more assured insights, and express their ideas fluently and cogently. Weaker students develop a sound understanding of texts and their essays show greater attention to detail and improvement in the organisation of their ideas. Very good progress was made in a Y12 lesson when students were given the

opportunity for active participation. Their level of understanding of the characteristics of post-war dramatists was significantly enhanced by the opportunity to practise and perform extracts from Pinter. In general, more rigorous procedures, including an emphasis on teaching examination technique, as well as the introduction of the school's literacy strategy, have contributed to improving progress and raising attainment. The department has been successful in its efforts to raise boys' attainments, mainly as a result of giving considerable thought to choosing texts and to appropriate methodology.

98. There is generally a satisfactory standard of literacy in other subjects of the curriculum. Students' oral skills are sound and the reading skills of most are sufficient to support learning. Most have a good range of research and information retrieval skills and it is hoped that these will develop further with the recent opening of the Language Resource Centre. In many subjects, and notably in history and technology, students write fluently in a variety of forms, and are now developing confidence in the use of subject-specific terminology. Not all subjects, however, show a consistent approach to the promotion of accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. The school's literacy policy has only been recently developed, with effective implementation from the beginning of this term. It is thorough and comprehensive and the responsibilities of all staff in all curricular areas to develop students' literacy are made clear. However, its effects on standards of literacy will need to be carefully monitored and evaluated. Further strategies to improve the reading and spelling skills of selected students have been put in place by the SEN and the English departments. Students receive help in a variety of ways, either individually or in small groups, and have responded seriously to this extra provision.

99. Students' attitudes to learning are varied. Most come well prepared, are keen to do well, and take their lessons seriously. Only a very small minority, mainly in KS4, show little interest in their work. Most students are attentive to their teachers and participate enthusiastically in class discussions. Some concentrate well in class, but a few are not able to sustain their efforts and frequently become restless, often because of a lack of tight lesson planning and timing on the teacher's part. Behaviour in class is generally satisfactory, with the exceptions already mentioned. In these cases constant talking slows down the progress of all in a lesson. Relations between students and between students and their teachers are usually good. Most students are co-operative and work well in groups when required to do so, although there is little opportunity to develop and sustain a high level of collaboration.

100. Teaching is at least satisfactory in the majority of lessons and frequently good. Students benefit from their teachers' very good subject knowledge and their understanding of examination and Test requirements. Teachers' expectations of students of all levels of ability are generally high, both in terms of classroom behaviour and of the level of work required. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of students with learning or other difficulties and frequently give a great deal of individual help during lessons. Classroom management is generally satisfactory and most classrooms are orderly, busy places. Discussions are usually well-handled. In the best lessons teachers maintain pace with energy and humour, and skilled questioning stimulates thought and ensures sound understanding. Most teachers' long term planning is sound, but more attention needs to be given to the planning of individual lessons and to the timing of activities within them. Some lessons end in a rush without effective consolidation of what has been achieved. Most work is marked regularly, although in KS3 marking is variable in quality, tending to be encouraging rather than rigorously analytical. There is a better standard of marking in KS4, and in the sixth form it is for the most part very good, with useful annotation, detailed analyses, and points for development. Homework is regularly set, but tasks and expectations are not always varied to match the varying learning needs within a class.

101. There is evidence of strong leadership exercised by the previous head of department,

whose vision and commitment resulted in the school's literacy policy and literacy strategies. Her recent death has left a temporary vacuum in the department, but the newly-appointed replacement will have much to build on when taking up her post next term. Schemes of work are being revised, and the department are aware that more should be done within the curriculum to develop students' IT skills. Teacher assessment in KS3 is moderated through discussion of examination scripts, but arrangements for standardisation need to be strengthened. There has been some development of common core assignments in Y7, which is an encouraging step towards consistency within the department. In order to achieve further consistency of practice and greater cohesion there should now be: revised schemes of work which include a more extensive common core; further monitoring of teachers' planning, curriculum coverage, marking and classroom practice.

Drama

102. Drama is only taught in KS4 and the sixth form. There have been detailed plans to integrate drama in KS3 with work in English, but this does not happen in practice and drama lessons taught by a specialist are needed. Levels of attainment in drama are high. GCSE results in 1999 were very good with over 90% of the candidates gaining higher grades. Results in 1998 were uncharacteristically low, but in the previous two years the proportion of students gaining higher grades was comfortably above the national average. A-level theatre studies has been replaced by an advanced level GNVQ in performing arts. Whereas the A-level results in 1997 and 1998 were poor, GNVQ students emerged with a high proportion of distinctions and merits. Numbers on the course are rising and current standards are good.

103. In KS4 most students have a sound understanding of the function of basic drama techniques, while the more able develop good performance skills, an ability to create atmosphere and tension, and achieve powerful expression of emotion. All show a good capacity for self-evaluation in lessons. The attainment of GNVQ students is well above national expectations. Last year's class won a national prize for a video on drink-driving made as part of their coursework in conjunction with Thames Valley Partnership. Students on this course demonstrate a high standard of vocational, artistic and technical skills.

104. Good and very good progress in lessons is seen in KS4, due to well-structured teaching and high expectations about the level of concentration needed. Over time, students improve in their understanding of how to use dramatic techniques in their own performance, and develop their work through increased depth of thought in self-evaluation. GNVQ students gain good technical skills, such as video-editing, partly as a result of liaison with the local arts centre. The structure of the course ensures that they learn good presentation skills, improve in self-organisation, and develop personal confidence. Well-designed, externally-based projects increase students' knowledge and understanding in a wide range of vocational contexts.

105. Students are well-motivated and respond well in class, contributing their own ideas and making perceptive comments. Behaviour is good: students are interested and many who are disaffected in other lessons are positive in their approach to drama. GNVQ students show a considerable degree of initiative and a highly developed sense of responsibility when undertaking their projects. Group collaboration is well developed in both key stages.

106. Teaching in drama is never less than good and is sometimes excellent. Classroom management is very good; the teacher sets clear standards of behaviour. Students receive a weekly bulletin so that they know what is expected and what they will be doing. Lessons are well planned and well paced. The assessment system is thorough: students have a clear idea of their level of attainment and their written work is marked in detail, with specific targets set.

107. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of work in drama. GNVQ students have a considerable degree of responsibility: they run drama clubs, manage the Christmas concert in a local church, and help to stage a major arts festival. Innovative use is made of both local and national connections: the external perspectives provided by the liaison with the arts centre are particularly beneficial to students. Good links with primary schools have been established, with Y10 students performing on tour. Drama makes a major contribution to students' social and personal development, it has a distinct influence on students' behaviour, encouraging co-operation, control and participation, and it plays an important part in the life of the school. These factors alone make the lack of drama in KS3 a matter of considerable concern.

Mathematics

108. Since the last inspection attainment in mathematics has been generally in line or above national norms. In KS3 national tests the proportion of students achieving level 5 or better was above average in the years 1996/98 and in line with the national standard in 1999. Attainment in classes in KS3 is somewhat below national expectations. In KS4 attainment in GCSE examinations over the past four years has been generally above national norms, with the exception of 1998 when the percentage of students gaining higher grades fell sharply to well below the national average. Attainment in lessons is significantly better than in KS3, although Y10 is weaker than Y11. In the sixth form A-level results have fluctuated in recent years but were good in 1999 with over half the entry gaining grades A or B. Attainment in the sixth form classes, however, is currently below national standards and progress overall is slow.

109. Students in KS3 make steady and sometimes good progress but there was considerable variation across the lessons observed. Some under-achievement was evident, especially in Y7, where the more able are not always sufficiently challenged. Many develop good spatial concepts and are able to use correct mathematical language to describe shapes and their properties. All students begin to learn algebra and the more able progress well in this aspect.

110. Numeracy skills show improvement, often from a relatively low baseline, but weaknesses remain, for example, in subtraction, fractions and estimation. Many students use calculators wherever possible but few routinely use estimation to check results. There is evidence of good use of data presentation and graphic skills across the school but most students would benefit from more regular and focused number skills activities, including mental skills.

111. Progress in KS4 is mostly good. The more able make faster progress and add greater depth to their understanding of number, algebra and trigonometry, for example. The less able derive benefit from working in smaller groups and motivation is sustained well. There is general improvement in using and applying mathematics to investigations with most students using logical methods and achieving better standards in the presentation of their results.

112. Students generally are willing to learn and listen with interest when the teaching is good. Although many have difficulty in giving oral explanations of their work, they respond well when given the opportunity to participate in extended discussions. Students develop good relationships and work well together in pairs. Behaviour is generally good but some have difficulty in sustaining concentration when tasks are not varied, and in these situations, behaviour can deteriorate. Many students take a pride in their work and strive hard to achieve neatness and accuracy, but some consistently produce untidy work and do not follow required procedures such as using pencil and ruler for drawings.

113. The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in about 80% of lessons and good or very good in nearly half. There is, however, some unsatisfactory teaching in KS3, mainly in classes taught by non-specialist part-time staff. The best lessons were well planned and had clear learning objectives; teachers made the work interesting and enjoyable and a good pace was maintained; effective questioning stimulated students' thinking and generated high quality discussion. In a lesson on congruence and similarity students were asked to draw any triangle and then write down instructions for another to be able to draw exactly the same triangle. There followed a very good discussion, skillfully managed, which led to identifying the minimum data needed to define a given triangle.

114. Unsatisfactory teaching was characterised by a lack of clarity about learning objectives and poor planning; introductions were confusing so students did not know what was expected of them; little account was taken of their prior learning; and routine exercises were allowed to continue for far too long without intervention. Management of students was often weak, resulting in poor behaviour. In one lesson on multiplying decimals the teacher was not clear whether the objective was to be able to use a routine for long multiplication, understand place value, or use a calculator efficiently. Consequently, most students resorted to using calculators to cover up their lack of understanding whilst the teacher seemed satisfied if answers were correct.

115. More generally the range of teaching and learning styles experienced by all students is limited. Learning support staff and those from the Speech and Language Resource are used well in the classroom to ensure that the students with SEN make progress in line with others. Nevertheless, some teachers need to take greater account of students' prior learning to ensure that work matches the needs of individual students.

116. The head of subject, in collaboration with the mathematics team, has made considerable progress in developing the departmental handbook, but the scheme of work for mathematics needs further development. Learning objectives need to be defined more clearly and accompanied by guidance on methodology to ensure a wider range of teaching and learning styles is provided. Use of IT has only just started in mathematics and appropriate activities need to be incorporated into the scheme. The provision of regular and more focused activities for developing numeracy skills, supported by a whole school numeracy policy, would address the need for improvement in this aspect.

117. Formal assessment through regular testing is in place and working well. Results are kept centrally and give an overview of progress which assists target setting. Records are conscientiously kept, but teachers taking on new classes are not always able to use the information to determine what students have already learnt. Statutory teacher assessment at KS3 is subjected to moderation procedures but there is further work needed in building up a portfolio of annotated students' work to exemplify standards and ensure consistency.

118. As well as improving the scheme of work the head of subject should take steps to share and spread existing good practice across the whole department. Monitoring of curriculum delivery in the classroom needs to be made more effective to ensure that all students are well taught and are given access to the full range of teaching and learning on offer.

Science

119. Students enter the school with levels of attainment in science that are below national levels for those reaching level 4 and above and level 5 and above. At the end of KS3 in 1998 the number of students attaining level 5 or above was in line with the national figure, and

matched that for other core subjects in the school. This year the results were well below both national level and those in other core subjects. Teacher assessments, which include assessment of experimental and investigative science, were better than the test results. In work observed in lessons, in students' books, and in discussion with students, attainment was in line with national averages. For instance, in a Y9 lesson, students showed a good knowledge of human organ systems and in particular the digestive system. In another, students demonstrated good knowledge of how genetic information is passed on by chromosomes. Attainment in all aspects of science, including experimental and investigative science, is close to national levels. The low attainment at the end of the key stage in 1999 may be partly explained by the time spent teaching in KS3 a number of topics that are in the national curriculum in KS4 and are not tested at the end of KS3.

120. In 1998 the proportions of students achieving higher grades and pass grades were in line with national figures for all science courses. In 1999 levels of attainment were above national averages in all science examinations. Levels of attainment demonstrated in the lessons and in the work of Y11 are in line with national averages. Overall the range of attainment matched national averages. A Y11 group studying the reactions of metal oxides and carbon could construct word and symbolic equations for the reaction. On the other hand, a lower attaining group planning an investigation into the rate of evaporation of water had only basic knowledge of the factors that might affect the rate and were not able to suggest scientific explanations.

121. In the sixth form small numbers of students take biology and chemistry, with rather larger numbers in physics. Overall recent results are in line with national figures. Attainment in lessons and written work are satisfactory.

122. Throughout KS3 students with all levels of attainment generally make satisfactory progress in lessons. A Y7 group made good progress in understanding the processes of weathering and erosion of rocks through good use of analogies. Through their own research in books and on the Internet another Y7 group made good progress in learning about healthy diets and eating disorders. Over time, progress is satisfactory. Students in Y9 are well placed to reach levels in line with national averages by the end of the year. Students with special education needs generally make satisfactory progress because they are in smaller classes and there is often support in class. Teachers generally have detailed information about students' special education needs and are able to provide appropriate help. Occasionally progress is unsatisfactory when students do not fully understand what they have been asked to do and do not see the relevance of the task.

123. Students make at least satisfactory progress in all lessons in KS4 and in the sixth form. Progress is good in nearly three quarters of lessons and occasionally excellent. Through perceptive questioning by the teacher a lower attaining Y11 group made good progress in understanding the structure of the solar system. Another higher attaining Y11 group made good progress in practical skills and in knowledge of the formation of ammonium chloride through clear demonstration followed by their own practical work. Generally students make satisfactory progress over the key stage. As in KS3 students with special education needs are often taught in smaller groups, sometimes with additional support staff, enabling better individual attention resulting in satisfactory progress. Teachers generally have a good understanding of students' individual needs.

124. Students' attitudes to learning are generally good. They are normally keen and interested, although in about one quarter of lessons in KS3 response is unsatisfactory. Students respond well when they fully understand what is expected of them, and when they see the relevance of what they are asked to do. They do not respond well when there is

uncertainty about the tasks and they lose interest and motivation. Relationships between students are good, and their relationship with the teacher is normally helpful to progress. Occasionally, when the teacher finds it necessary to repeat instructions frequently, and sometimes loudly, some students become resentful and unco-operative.

125. Teaching is satisfactory or better in almost all lessons. It is good in nearly half the lessons and occasionally very good or excellent. The proportion of good lessons is higher in KS4 than in KS3. The best teaching is characterised by good teacher knowledge of the subject, good planning, and appropriate expectations of behaviour and of attainment. Lessons are conducted at a good pace, often in order to complete a practical exercise within the 60-minute period. There are appropriate changes of activity to maintain interest and concentration. When teachers give students opportunity to show initiative and take responsibility, they respond well and make excellent progress. A Y11 group, who had spent a homework in research of the topic, enthusiastically acted out rôles in a simulated debate of whether a village should support the test planting of genetically modified plants. They made excellent progress in understanding the science behind the debate as well as in understanding some of the associated ethical and moral issues. In a combined upper and lower sixth group students who were not being directly taught made good progress while working together and managing their own learning. Practical work is generally well organised, although even in KS4 some students need to be reminded frequently about procedures, such as the use of eye protection, because good habits are not universal.

126. All science teaching takes place in laboratories, but the furnishing of most of these hinders circulation and does not easily allow differing arrangements for group work and practical work. The display of posters and students' work in laboratories helps to create a good working atmosphere in the department that promotes learning. The department is well led and efficiently managed.

127. The requirements of the national curriculum for science are broadly met in both key stages. There is, however, insufficient attention given to some aspects of the common requirement, such as the nature of scientific ideas, and the need for students to consider their own safety and assess risks. Although there is some good use of ICT this aspect is currently under-developed and not integrated into schemes of work. Steps are being taken to improve this. Attainment at the end of KS3 has steadily improved since the time of the previous inspection report, although there was a significant drop in 1999. The pass rate at GCSE higher grades has steadily improved and is now well above national levels. Teaching, and in particular marking, has improved. Financial provision for the subject is now at a satisfactory level.

128. The new head of department has made a very good start in analysing the needs of the department and in assessing priorities. He should, through monitoring and paired lesson observations, ensure that the teaching in all lessons reaches the high standards in some. Through the establishment of good practices throughout the department he should ensure that classes are well and easily managed. He should also ensure that schemes of work match the requirements of the national curriculum, and include opportunities for the use of ICT and the other "common requirements", such as students being taught to take responsibility for their own safety in laboratories. The introduction of extra-curricular clubs and activities would enhance the popularity of science. The school should continue to press for the refurbishment of laboratories.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

129. Overall standards of attainment in art for all students have improved since the last inspection. The department offers a good quality art education for all students.

130. By the end of KS3 the majority of students, including those with SEN, attain levels in art which are in line with national expectations. A minority of students attain above this. Sketchbooks are used well to support class projects. Drawing and painting skills are systematically developed over the key stage so students' ability to use a variety of media to make visual responses, particularly when working from observation, is satisfactory. Y8 students had produced some vibrant and expressive imaginative compositions based on "time tunnels", whilst Y9 students showed their skills in mixing and matching colour in painting from observation.

131. Students are skilled at applying graphic techniques to create their design work but have few opportunities to explore their ideas through the use of computers. Students show fair imagination when making sculpture but some of their clay work lacks finish. They are exposed to a great deal of information about art and artists and most have acquired a sound grasp of chronology, style and genre of art from different times and cultures.

132. By the end of KS4 attainment for the majority is in line with expected levels, with some students attaining above this. GCSE results for 1999 were above the national average, with 64% of students obtaining higher grades. All students achieved a grade. Most students in Y10 and Y11 show well developed practical skills and are able to sustain a study from conception to realisation. They are confident in working independently in developing their ideas in a personal way. Sketchbooks are well used by all students for research. All students taking A-level in 1998 achieved a grade, and results were in line with the national average. The work of the present Y13 students shows mature, personal and innovative approaches to the interpretation of ideas. A few students in Y12 have weak drawing skills which depresses the standard of their work.

133. All students in KS3, including those on the SEN register, are making at least sound progress in lessons. Less able students make better progress in practical work than in their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of art. Students in KS4 make sound to good progress in all aspects of the art curriculum. Students on the A-level course are making sound progress in all their coursework.

134. Students are motivated, show interest in their work, and concentrate well. They are well prepared for their lessons and complete their homework assignments on time. All students show a pride in their work, are respectful of their environment, and take responsibility for their materials. They show initiative in using various sources to find out about artists, including the use of books and CD ROMs, and older students are familiar with visiting galleries and museums.

135. The vast majority of teaching is at least satisfactory and in well over half the lessons it is good or very good. Teaching is particularly good in the sixth form. Teachers have good subject knowledge and can employ a fair range of teaching approaches. In the best lessons work is sufficiently challenging; time and resources are well used; and teachers supply a rich range of supporting materials. In all lessons teachers ensure that the aims are very clear to students and encourage them to use and understand specialist language. Planning is thorough, although not enough attention is paid to the methods of teaching lower ability sets to

ensure that all students concentrate well and understand the concepts being taught. Good use is made of presentations about art and artists and the demonstration of techniques. Teachers' expectations of behaviour are high and there is generally good classroom control. There is a system for assessing students' work which is consistently used by teachers, but much of this is verbal and as yet the department does not have centrally held records of what students can do. Homework is appropriate, regularly set and marked.

136. Overall management is very good and leadership provides a clear vision for the development of the department. With the exception of IT, the curriculum meets statutory requirements and ensures a good balance of both attainment targets. The computers available to the department are sufficient for the retrieval of information but not for generating design work. Resources for A-level students are very limited.

137. In order to improve further attainment and progress the quality of teaching needs to be monitored to ensure consistently high standards. Schemes of work need reviewing to ensure that the methods used for teaching meet the needs of all the students.

Design Technology

138. Students in KS3 experience a range of tasks, assignments and investigations in a variety of design areas. They are involved in product design, graphics, food, textiles, control and electronics, and are building up a bank of skills and knowledge. Students use a structured design framework through which they tackle a range of practical projects. There is clear evidence of good progress in all specialist areas. Students develop a good range of graphical skills and techniques which, together with text, enables them to generate, develop and communicate their ideas. Presentational quality is also enhanced through the use of IT. Work in folders reflects a good range of assignments which provide important skills for the more open-ended work in KS4. Attainment at the end of KS3 is satisfactory.

139. Work in KS4 enables students to develop their interests in one of three areas (product design, food or electronic products). Through a series of design projects students generate ideas and develop them through a structured process. The presentational quality of design folders is good and the range of graphical techniques contributes much to this quality. Students are exposed to a selection of exemplar materials and good display work and this assists them to develop interesting work of quality. Good use is made of IT in the planning process. Attendance at the Tech. Club, in open access time after school, project support materials, and personal monitoring have made an important contribution to an overall rise in attainment. Practical work in all areas is well managed, lessons are appropriately planned, and resources well organised. Students are well motivated and provide evidence of the development of independent learning skills. The number of students gaining higher grades in GCSE courses has risen considerably, for the second year in succession. This year in electronics 63% of students gained higher grades, 76% in product design and 74% in food. In the child development course all students were successful in gaining higher grade passes. All of these results are well above the national average and represent outstanding success. The percentage of students gaining A*/A grades was also higher than the national average.

140. Students in the sixth form were all successful in A-level design and technology. Work was well presented and individuals developed interests and distinctive styles. Much work is innovative and grows out of experiments and investigations.

141. Students in KS3 make good progress as they acquire skills, knowledge and understanding. Detailed assessment procedures provide important feedback on attainment and progress and students are expected to contribute self-assessment. Individual profiles

enable staff to evaluate progress and assist in setting appropriate learning targets. Students in KS4 also make good progress and they are assisted by a range of teachers, support strategies. Motivation is high and value-added statistics indicate that girls achieve nearly a grade above their average and that mid and high ability boys achieve almost half a grade higher than their average. Students with SEN are clearly identified and overall make sound progress. Students on the sixth form course make good progress and have commendable success in the A-level examination.

142. Behaviour is good and students are generally attentive. They are interested in the range of design activities available to them and they are able to concentrate for appropriate periods of time. Through the teaching strategies developed in the department students are able to research from a range of sources and develop personal styles. Some work reflects initiative and student interest and is of good and very good quality. Construction and making aspects provide evidence of sensible and safe working practices.

143. Teachers are well organised and they use time and resources effectively. Teachers are qualified and possess appropriate expertise in the areas in which they teach. Exemplar materials and display work are used to stimulate and establish quality. Relationships with students are good and the team has established an ethos for learning within the department. Discipline is good, assessment procedures detailed, and work is well planned. Students are able to move freely around the department and to benefit from the full range of learning resources and equipment. Homework is integral to project work. The quality of teaching overall is good and there are examples of very good teaching. The team is well supported by two experienced and competent technicians.

144. The head of department is an experienced and competent teacher who leads the department well. Documentation is good and the department has a good range of policies and detailed schemes of work. Assessment is used to monitor learning and to set individual targets. There are good relationships and all students experience a broad and balanced curriculum. The programme of studies largely covers the National Curriculum, with the exception of control technology, which is currently undergoing further development. Responsibilities within the department are delegated to colleagues and the two sections work well together. Accommodation is appropriate to the activities taught and some has been upgraded since the last inspection. Current financial resources are about adequate for running the department and supporting the range of design activities but there is a need to develop IT further and to replace aging computers. There is also a need to introduce a range of numerical controlled equipment to ensure that students apply their IT skills within the context of subject studies and as part of the production process.

145. This is a good department which has improved since the 1995 inspection and serves the school well.

Geography

146. Attainment in geography at the end of Y9 matches national expectations. Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of places and themes outlined in the programme of study, offer explanations for ways in which human activities affect different environments, and a significant proportion recognise that people manage environments. Students show relative strength in their skills of recording information in writing, notes and extended prose, and in drawing maps, diagrams and graphs. Y9 students drew excellent choropleth maps of indicators of levels of economic development in different countries, for example. ICT is used effectively in a number of ways, such as data manipulation, obtaining information, and word processing. Students understand and use an enquiry approach and

make well-supported decisions about possible changes in economic development at a range of scales. At the end of Y11 the proportion of students gaining higher grades in GCSE matches national averages, with no significant differences between boys and girls. Strengths developed in earlier years continue and, for example, individual studies on rivers show students' good knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes, application of these in fieldwork, and thoughtful appraisal of effects people have on local rivers. Y11 students showed good application of previous knowledge and awareness of current events in an introduction to work on natural hazards. Attainment at A-level is sound. The numbers are small but in 1999 most attained grades B to D. Current students show a similar range of attainment in their work. A relative weakness is the poor planning of extended writing.

147. Students make good progress in geography throughout the school. They enter Y7 with relatively poor knowledge of themes and skills and make marked progress in both, as well as knowledge of places, by the end of Y9. In Y10 and Y11 progress seen in lessons was good or very good, as when students developed greater understanding of patterns and processes of tectonic activity in the world. Low attaining students are enabled to make good progress by work adapted to meet their needs. In a Y13 lesson students made very good progress in understanding the use of hypotheses and some relevant statistical techniques.

148. Geography lessons are characterised by well-behaved students who settle down to work quickly and show interest in contributing to the work. Although in some classes a small minority of students chatted off-task, they quickly resumed their concentration when reminded. Students collaborated well in lessons: in one Y9 class students helped each other without being asked to and older students worked well together. Students develop their ability for personal study and reach good standards.

149. The quality of teaching is good, particularly in KS4 and the sixth form. Planning is thorough and a wide range of methods is used, including whole class teaching, group and paired work, rôle play and simulations, fieldwork, and individual enquiry. Students are encouraged to develop language skills by making presentations to their class and by learning to write notes as well as continuous prose. A range of good resources is used well, though more frequent use could be made of video. Assessment is rigorous and carefully moderated. Future development of assessment tasks in KS3 needs to ensure explicit inclusion of more elements of the levels of description.

150. The good quality of work in this department is underpinned by good and efficient leadership and management. Documentation is detailed and helpful, resources are well organised and accessible. The quality of display is excellent and teachers work well together as a team. It is a relatively inexperienced department which has maintained the standards reported in 1995 and has the potential to become even stronger.

History

151. Standards have further improved since the last inspection. The 1995 inspection report noted that *standards matched the national average at KS3 and were well above average at KS4 and in the sixth form*. Attainment by Y9 is good. During KS3 students make an early start on causation and develop their interpretative skills well. Students present ideas and arguments effectively and confidently in oral work and in a range of written work. Cogent, well-founded arguments, and good extended analytical writing, some of it near to GCSE expectations, are characteristic of work in Y9.

152. At KS4 attainment is good, sometimes very good, in lessons. Essays are well drafted

and organised and care is taken over form and presentation. Source analysis is good. Skills of rapid analysis and ordering of evidence help students to marshal arguments quickly. They write well, in accordance with examination expectations. They know what has to be done to get a good grade at GCSE. Work in the sixth form builds on these good foundations. Students have an early induction which makes clear the challenges and expectations of A-level work. Results at GCSE are very good. In 1998, 71% achieved good grades. This increased to 88% in 1999. In both years all students achieved a pass. A* or A grades were awarded to 24% in 1998 and 34% in 1999. These are outstanding results. A-level results have also improved with around half of candidates achieving grades A to C.

153. Progress is good or very good in lessons at KS3 and KS4. Good progress has been maintained also in the sixth form. From Y7 students begin challenging work, gain critical and analytical skills, and test evidence from a variety of sources. They learn to make mature, balanced and qualified assessments of the reliability and usefulness of sources. They gain rapidly in confidence and are able to challenge assumptions and present ideas and arguments clearly. By Y9 they have developed the skill of good analytical writing and tackle a wide range of writing styles. Good or very good progress in KS4 enables most students to perform well above expectations in GCSE examinations. At A-level good progress continues in the context of a rigorous and demanding course.

154. In all lessons students are generally well motivated and develop skills as independent thinkers and learners. Many develop a love of the subject. Attitudes are positive and students work well in a variety of settings, including group and paired work.

155. Teaching is very strong and a credit to a dedicated team of teachers. Almost all teaching observed was good or better. Three quarters was very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are able to challenge students to develop more detailed and sophisticated arguments and to see connections between events and historical periods. Planning of lessons, range of methods, and student management are of a high standard. Teachers' expectations of students are very high. Assessment, including marking, is good and teachers set clear targets for improvement. Homework tasks extend students well and extension work is provided for higher attainers. There is need to develop strategies for students with SEN. General strategies are in place but work needs to be done on subject specific measures to meet targets in individual IEPs.

156. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements. Setting works well and there are clear criteria for movement between sets – independent reading, length and structure of written responses, factual recall, and analysis of evidence. Assessment informs reviews and analyses of student progress. Value added work informs departmental reviews and the targets set for the department.

157. Departmental leadership is strong and teachers work together well. There is a climate of self-evaluation and a drive for further improvement. Departmental action plans are well focused. Cross-curricular links are established. Displays are good, accommodation and resources are used effectively.

158. The department has teachers who sustain a firm drive for continuous improvement. Teachers have high expectations of themselves and students. The department should implement its action plan and also liaise with learning support staff to develop IEPs as a vehicle for informing the response to the specific needs of students in history lessons.

Information Technology

159. Standards of IT competence are unsatisfactory at all levels. This is a worse situation than that reported in the inspection in 1995. The main reason for this is the lack of curriculum time and curriculum continuity inherent in present arrangements. Students come to the school with very variable IT, attainment including a few with a high level of skill but little understanding, and a larger number with very limited skill. Through the school their skills in data communication are developed through use of simple standard software. Their progress in some classes is good. There are some attempts to reinforce competence within other subjects but this is at a low level, from an IT point of view, and some areas, particularly measurement and control, have not yet been covered. By the end of KS3, except for a very few home computer enthusiasts, standards are unsatisfactory. The published teacher assessments were based only on the data communications strand and these are very optimistic. National Curriculum requirements are not being met. In KS4 an appropriate GCSE short course in IT is offered to all students, but time allocation is too small and results in 1999 were poor. Again, National Curriculum requirements are not fully covered. In the sixth form A-level computing is being offered for the first time this year. The course is not appropriate for the students, most of whom failed to gain a higher grade in the short GCSE, and current standards are poor. These students do not have an adequate background to enable satisfactory progress.

160. Teaching is quite variable in quality, reflecting the differing background experience of the teachers and the different situation of the student groups. There is much good and occasionally very good teaching. All teachers are competent at this level but their confidence, experience, and depth of knowledge vary. They use appropriate methods and class organisation, and generally the tasks given are properly planned and relevant. Particularly at GCSE and A-level the facilities and software limit what can be planned and delivered. Homework is properly used. Generally, students welcome the opportunity to use IT, though some comment unfavourably on the school equipment and software. In classes they are attentive and there are examples of good collaboration. Relationships with staff are mostly good.

161. The curriculum in KS3 and KS4 consists of a module in each year of about five weeks times three hours. Modules in KS3 are taught by technology staff as part of the technology carousel. These modules progressively introduce students to major software application areas, but time limitations mean that they can only reach low levels of competence. Each year students need to spend some time revising/reminding themselves of previous work. The GCSE course is taught by the IT co-ordinator in time released by other subjects. This makes the planning particularly difficult since the IT work needs to link with appropriate activity in the other subjects. National Curriculum requirements are not met in KS3 or KS4. There are some contributions to IT consolidation from other subjects and there are plans for more. However, much firmer co-ordination, planning and mapping is required to ensure appropriate IT levels are expected and delivered. In KS4 GNVQ part 1 or Key Skills accreditation may be appropriate. In the sixth form the A-level syllabus chosen is not supported by adequate resources or student competence, and the provision should be reviewed.

162. The head of IT is also temporary IT co-ordinator. She also teaches geography and RE. She leads on IT in KS4 and has oversight of IT in KS3 which has been delivered by the technology department for some years. The A-level computing is delivered by a part-time teacher from the mathematics department. A deputy head, on secondment, is due to return in January to take back the IT co-ordination rôle. There is a separate hardware manager and a technician. This is not a clear structure of responsibilities and can't help the development of the subject or the use of IT across the curriculum. A reasonable ICT handbook has been developed with relevant policy statements in most areas. A development plan has been produced with agreed targets for 1999/2000. Links have been made with individuals in many

subject departments. However, the status of ICT in the school is not sufficiently high and strong leadership will be required, with senior management support, to pull the subject together and drive it forward - and enable the IT teachers to contribute missionary zeal to the development of ICT use across the school. There will also be a need for a systematic programme of staff development to enhance the ICT skills, knowledge and understanding of all teachers.

163.

The number of personal computers (PCs) available for student use is good. The ratio of students:computers is about 5:1 which is significantly better than the national average. Most of the machines are industry compatible PCs. However, the PCs are mostly some years old and cannot use modern industry standard software. They are not networked and there are some difficulties with printing. A few machines in the Library, Research Centre have access to the Internet and multi-media. However, those used for IT teaching can support only relatively simple data communications and cannot provide good support for some of the requirements of the IT curriculum beyond KS3. The GCSE and, particularly the A-level course, are restricted because of this. There are a number of machines within several departments, but again these are predominantly older PCs.

Modern Foreign Languages

164. By the end of KS3 and KS4 overall attainment in French is in line with the national averages and it is good for those students in the top sets. GCSE results in 1998 are in line with the national average and have improved markedly in 1999. This is also an improvement since the 1995 inspection when GCSE results were about the national average but many fewer students studied languages at KS4.

165. In KS3 students understand a good range of classroom language and instructions, and produce simple exchanges in rôle play using visual clues as prompts. They read short texts from the textbook accurately but with approximate pronunciation due to the lack of emphasis on this aspect of teaching. Reading is mainly confined to the textbook and very few students read independently or use context to guess meaning. Skills in writing are much better, with higher attainers writing guided compositions and applying their knowledge of grammar, and students of average ability writing shorter pieces.

166. In KS4 high attainers demonstrate good knowledge of vocabulary, including some less well-known sports which they use to build up a rôle play with a partner. Less able students have a reasonable grasp of vocabulary but their pronunciation is not fluent because of the lack of practicing the language orally and, for a minority of boys, because of negative attitudes to learning. There are good examples of writing in paragraphs which demonstrate a good grasp of tenses and a range of structures. Students' work is well presented and this helps them in using their previous learning as a reference for further progress. Progress is satisfactory for the majority of students and is good for high attainers. This is reflected in sustained opportunities of language practice and in students' ability to build on what they have learnt previously. Homework plays a critical rôle in enabling students to learn vocabulary and use it in new contexts. In some lessons, however, progress is inhibited either because of the inexperience of the teacher in keeping students focused on learning through more motivating tasks, or because a minority present challenging behaviour.

167. By the end of their studies in the sixth form students' attainment is in line with the national average. Examination entries are small and so comparisons with national averages are inappropriate. Students demonstrate understanding of authentic texts and apply their knowledge of structures and tenses to write at length on a number of topics. They take part in discussions and practice this skill in rôle play. Students make satisfactory progress with a good consolidation of skills in using an increasing stock of vocabulary and structures.

168. Throughout all key stages the majority of students show interest and are attentive. Students collaborate when given the opportunity and enjoy pair work. The majority respond positively to the teacher's use of the target language, but rarely take the initiative to use it themselves because they are not provided with strategies and sufficient practice during lessons. On occasions students do not concentrate well and tend to fidget because they have

not acquired the ground rules and the self-discipline necessary for language learning.

169. The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in over two thirds of lessons and unsatisfactory in under one third. Where teaching is good planning is focused on enabling students to practice the language sufficiently, with activities increasing in challenge and culminating in the use of language in rôle play to simulate real communication. This was well exemplified in a Y11 lesson, where homework was given at the beginning of the lesson to ensure there was ample time for students to understand what was expected, and the focus on practicing the language of sports enabled students to express their likes and dislikes for particular sports; when students had sufficient practice they were challenged to add the reason for their preferences based on a menu of possible alternatives written on the board; the greater part of the lesson was conducted orally, at a brisk pace, involving all the students and enabling them to reactivate language previously learned. Where teaching was unsatisfactory objectives were solely identified in terms of the topic rather than the skills within the programmes of study; too much English was used; and activities were disjointed and not focused on rehearsing the language needed to enable students to gain fluency and tackle more authentic tasks based on real communication. Across all lessons teaching is sometimes too narrowly based on the textbook with little adaptation of the material presented to make it more personally relevant. In some instances standards of discipline are unsatisfactory and this is exacerbated by the lack of match of work to the needs of students presenting challenging behaviour.

170. Planning of the curriculum in KS3 and KS4 does not take account of part 1 of the programmes of study and is mainly driven through topics and the content of textbooks used. This results in a lack of clarity about how these skills are featured within each year group and lines of continuity and progression across the various strands. Some aspects of cultural awareness arise incidentally in textbooks, and are supported through trips, but are not being addressed systematically in the schemes of work. There is no provision for ICT mainly because of the lack of access to facilities. The insufficient allocation of time to students studying two languages, which was raised in the last inspection report, has not been addressed.

171. Procedures for assessment are satisfactory with effective recording of all aspects of students' attainment. A good start has been made in analysing GCSE data, but as yet no clear strategies have been identified to target specific groups on the basis of assessment, and the year targets used are too broad to measure improvements. Appropriate certification has been developed to cater for students for whom GCSE is not suitable.

172. Members of the department work well as a team and the staff are provided with guidance and support. Procedures for development planning are not clearly identified on the basis of reviewing different aspects of provision, and this makes targets less tangible and hard to assess without measurable criteria. There is a good range of book resources, with all students able to keep a textbook, and access to good audiovisual and reading resources. However, there is a lack of authentic resources, including audio and video materials.

Music

173. The music department provides a good quality of education and has greatly improved on the below average standards reported in the last inspection. Students' experience in music lessons is helping to build their confidence and self-esteem.

174. By the end of KS3 students' attainment is in line with national expectations in all aspects of the curriculum. A good number of students are attaining above this. In Y7 students have a sound sense of melody and can sustain a simple rhythm, holding their own part against that played by others. Most students have a basic knowledge of chord structure and can

perform simple pieces on the keyboard; higher attaining students do this with fluency and accuracy. In Y8 students have composed some atmospheric and moving responses to the theme of animals. In Y9 they can confidently play a piece, based on African drumming, as a whole class. When listening to music most students display a basic knowledge of notation; they know the names of various instruments; and have a sound knowledge of music of different styles and times. They listen carefully to music performed by their peers and make reasoned and well constructed evaluations.

175. The head of department has worked hard to improve the standards of attainment of students in KS4, and has managed to recruit a good number of dedicated students onto the GCSE course. Standards in Y10 and Y11 are in line with expected levels and some are attaining above this. The keenness and dedication of the students, together with the good teaching which they are receiving, should ensure that they have a fair level of success in external examinations. In 1999 only two students took GCSE music and both attained an A grade. Y10 students have a reasonable knowledge of notation and can play increasingly complex pieces on the keyboard. They compose imaginatively and with feeling. Some find the listening component more difficult. In Y11 there are some very talented musicians who are capable of composing multi-track pieces of sophisticated complexity. Some students following the GCSE course have instrumental tuition and this has a significant effect on their standards.

176. There is good take-up of the wide range of instrumental tuition on offer. This is of a high quality and leads to students participating in bands, ensembles and singing groups. Students thoroughly enjoy these sessions, attain well, and make good progress. The Rock Choir is a good example of the keenness of students to participate in music; over 70 students of all ages come together to sing during their lunchtime. The standard of singing is very good. Music makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and personal development.

177. The department is rightly concentrating on ensuring that students acquire basic music skills and knowledge in KS3, and all students, including those with SEN, are making good progress. Students in both key stages make significant gains in subject skills in lessons. Their knowledge and understanding of music and their confidence in performing is growing steadily through the carefully planned curriculum.

178. Students' response to music is very good. They enjoy their music lessons and come ready and eager to learn. In all lessons they show high levels of participation, are very enthusiastic, and can concentrate for good periods of time. All students work willingly in pairs and groups and try to listen carefully to each other when performing.

179. Teaching is never less than good; the majority of lessons are very good or excellent. Teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge and thorough lesson plans which correspond with the schemes of work. The pace of lessons is lively and encourages a sense of fun and enjoyment. High expectations of the students, together with an appropriate range of approaches, enthruses students to give of their best. The chosen musical forms and styles engage and reflect students' own interests and experiences. There is a purposeful working atmosphere and students are encouraged to refine and modify their work. Assessment is regular and ongoing, and gives a clear picture of what students know and can do.

180. The head of department has a clear vision for the future of music in the school and has worked hard to establish the subject as an important part of the curriculum. In a very short time she has successfully increased the number of students who choose music at KS4 and the number who take part in instrumental tuition, and has expanded the range of extra-curricular activities. There are many opportunities for students to perform in public, including assemblies

and end of term shows. Very good use is made of the local arts centre and joint initiatives with local primary schools. The instrumental teaching programme is efficiently organised and makes a valuable contribution to the work of the department. The general accommodation and the resources for music are good, but both teaching rooms are in need of more plugs for keyboards.

Physical Education

181. Attainment in PE is satisfactory overall. Although some students are achieving good levels of attainment, that of a significant minority of students is less than satisfactory. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. At KS3 the work in gymnastics is variable. The best shows some fluency in sequence work but there is insufficient development and refinement in much of the work on travelling, jumps lack height, and often footwork is poor. In dance some Y9 boys showed considerable creativity and were able to work effectively in small groups. However, their movement vocabulary is limited. In extra-curricular netball handling skills are often good but footwork is less secure. Students understand the short-term effects of exercise on the body. At KS4 some students demonstrated a good level of skills in hockey and an appropriate understanding of the game. There was little evidence of their understanding the role of officials. Last summer's GCSE results continued an upward trend; all the 33 entries gained passes; 68% of boys and 62% of girls gained higher grades. In the sixth form there is some detailed work in the files of A-level PE students. Last year's examination results also showed considerable improvement: of 11 entries 9 gained passes, including five grade A and one grade B.

182. Progress at KS3 is variable. Although some students make good progress in terms of performance often they have insufficient understanding of how to refine their work or of progression within activities. At KS4 there is evidence of some sound progress in games skills which is applied to the game context. Progress in GCSE PE theory course work is often good in Y11. Progress in extra curricular activities is good; students' involvement in an extensive programme of extra curricular activities and inter-school fixtures has contributed to progress in performance.

183. Students' attitudes to learning range from very good to poor. At KS3 the behaviour of a significant minority of students is poor. The majority apply themselves to the tasks set, are attentive and able to work effectively with a partner or in small groups. Students mostly are enthusiastic but some have major difficulties in channeling their energy constructively, and are unwilling to concentrate and apply themselves to the task set. At KS4 the attitudes of students are frequently exemplary; the majority are attentive but often both the level and span of concentration is insufficient to support good learning. In the sixth form attitudes are mostly good.

184. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory and on occasions good. The strengths include clear exposition, good organization, and carefully planned units of work. At KS3 in particular, although lesson planning includes aims, activities and organisation, it does not adequately identify teaching objectives or progression in terms of the development of skills, understanding and knowledge. The diagnosis of the learning needs of students to inform teaching and make it relevant to specific groups is often inadequate, and in gymnastics and dance especially there is insufficient attention to the 'how' or the quality of movement in order to refine it. This reduces the progress of students and some unsatisfactory lessons were seen. At KS4 teaching is satisfactory to good. There was little evidence of provision for the range of ability within a class other than in terms of the work done, or of students being given responsibility for their own learning in practical work. In the sixth form the A-level groups are small and the teaching is satisfactory. The general sixth form programme of games and PE

activities is regarded as recreational and the teaching element varies with the activity undertaken. However, participation is closely monitored for attendance and attitude.

185. The quality of PE and sports resources and provision has been recognised externally by the award of the *Sportsmark*. The department is staffed by four young and committed specialist trained teachers. No one, including the head of department, has more than three years teaching experience, but between them they have a variety of teaching strengths. The department is very well organised. Accommodation is exceptionally good, though the gymnasium and sports hall are located far apart. The school has extensive outdoor areas including use of an *Astroturf* pitch, funded by the local hockey club. The high quality of displays on notice boards creates an ethos which is both inclusive and challenging. Documentation, which includes a sound assessment policy and carefully prepared units of work, is often very good, although the development plan lacks criteria for evaluating the achievement of targets and there are no clear time scales or costings. Key points for action to improve further the quality of teaching and levels of attainment are: the introduction of more clearly defined teaching targets based on diagnostic assessment of learning needs; identification of progressive steps in the development of performance; the sharing and development of successful student management strategies, with particular reference to those with SEN.

Religious Education

186. Overall, the attainment of students at KS3 is in line with the attainment of those of a similar age nationally, although within this there is a spread of attainment, with some students achieving above national expectations, while others achieve well below expected levels. A similar picture was found in KS4. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were good. This represents a significant improvement from the previous inspection. A small number of students took the full course GCSE examination and all obtained higher grades. Most of the other students in the year group took the short course GCSE and 73% gained higher grades. These results are above national norms. This was a marked improvement from the previous year when all students took the full course and 47% obtained the higher grades. A small number of students in the present sixth form is studying for A-level, and the first group will take the examination in the summer of 2000. Observations in lessons and scrutiny of work suggest that the attainment of these students is satisfactory or better.

187. Students enter the school with a variety of previous knowledge and experiences of RE, but many at KS3 make satisfactory and sometimes good progress over time. These students consolidate and extend the knowledge and understanding from KS2, acquiring information about many of the world's major religions. They learn about Christianity, its development and scriptures, together with some of the best-known biblical stories. They learn to use many of the key words correctly. In addition they learn more about other religions. Other students, particularly lower attainers, make less progress, especially where there are no additional or alternative materials or tasks designed to help them. In lessons seen during the inspection most students made some progress. At KS4 many students make sound progress, and some make good progress. They learn about the life and teachings of Christ in some depth, and this is linked to Christian beliefs. They look at a range of moral issues such as racism, prejudice and divorce, and make progress with linking these to religious teachings. They are able both to discuss and write about these issues, describing their own views and acknowledging the views of others. In the sixth form students generally make good progress in lessons and over time, although the teaching of the two year groups together sometimes puts students who are at an early stage in the course at a disadvantage. A-level students continue with the development of their knowledge about Christianity and biblical themes, and use this

information to look at a range of ethical questions such as freedom and responsibility.

188. The response of most students is never less than satisfactory and often good. In KS3 students are generally attentive in lessons, listen carefully to each other and to the teachers' explanations and instructions. They participate well in question and answer sessions and settle quickly to tasks, often applying themselves enthusiastically. They work sensibly, both individually and in groups. Much work is well presented, but lower attainers complete a limited amount of work. In KS4 most have a positive attitude to work, answer questions readily, and take part sensibly in class and group discussions. In this context they share their own ideas about religion and show respect for the ideas and faiths of other students. They concentrate well on individual tasks.

189. Much of the teaching seen was good, and none was less than satisfactory. This is an improvement on the last inspection when some lessons, particularly at KS4, were described as having significant shortcomings. Good teaching is characterised by sound planning to meet the needs of all the students in the class, and by high expectations of both learning and behaviour. Good questioning strategies involve all students in the class, encouraging them to share their ideas and knowledge. A range of appropriate activities is used to keep students' interest. In some lessons there is a lack of clarity about learning objectives and limited attention is paid to the different needs of learners. Because teachers are non-specialists there are examples of an inability to deal with queries and to develop topics, together with some reliance on published worksheets.

190. The subject makes a good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are given opportunities to discuss their own and others' beliefs and are encouraged to treat these with respect. Moral and social development are supported through discussions on issues such as family life, racism, prejudice and honesty, while cultural development is enhanced when students learn about different faiths and faith communities.

191. Management of the department is good. The Head of Department has made progress with addressing many of the issues highlighted in the previous inspection. Much work has been undertaken to bring the topics covered into line with the Local Agreed Syllabus, and the subject now meets statutory requirements. The Head of Department plans to develop the schemes of work to include more strategies and materials for students of differing attainment, together with cross-curricular links. Assessment is being developed based on the attainment targets in the syllabus. A portfolio of examples of students' work will make all teachers aware of the requirements at different levels in the subject. The Head of Department has not yet observed RE lessons taught by others. Some teachers are not RE specialists and have had no opportunities for INSET, other than those provided by the Head of Department.

192. The hours allocated at KS3 and KS4 are sufficient except that, as at the last inspection, there is insufficient time for the GCSE long course. Last year students were offered twilight sessions to ameliorate this unsatisfactory situation. Setting arrangements for the subject are not appropriate, particularly at KS4 where RE is taught in sets according to mathematical ability. The A-level is shared between Y12 and Y13 because of the small number of students studying the subject, and this causes some difficulty for Y12 students who do not have the same background knowledge and understanding as those who are a year into the course. Some RE is included in the General Studies programme in the sixth form, but time allocation should be extended. The Head of RE, who is also Head of Sixth Form, is undertaking a review of the General Studies course to address this issue.

193. There is one designated RE room, but teachers who are non-specialists teach in other classrooms, and this makes access to books and resources difficult. Display in and around the

one designated classroom is good, showing information about different faiths and a range of students' work. Display also includes many of the key words for the subject, helping to develop literacy and supporting the learning of less able students. Resources for RE are being developed. There is a reasonable range of books, videos and artefacts, but there are not yet sufficient books available to give students of different abilities access to information, or to provide a suitable range of texts for the new A-level course. There is very limited use of ICT in the department, although students are encouraged to use this as a source for researching information. There have been some visits to places of worship of different religions, and involvement of people from different faith communities in talking to students. The department has plans to develop both resources and the use of visits.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

194. The team of 12 inspectors spent a total of 45 days in the school. This included 151 hours of direct observation of students' work: 243 observations including 174 lessons plus some form times and assemblies. Almost all full-time and part-time teachers were seen teaching, with most being seen on several occasions. A number of meetings and extra-curricular activities were observed. Planned discussions were held with all heads of department and year, and senior managers. Separate meetings were held with the chair of governors, the chairs of two major governors' committees, and the SEN link governor.

195. Inspectors looked at the work of many students, including all the available written work from a representative sample of students from each year and students with statements of SEN. Planned discussions were held with these students and informal discussions took place with many others. Documentation provided by the school was analysed both before and during the inspection. Before the inspection a meeting was held between the registered inspector and 17 parents. Separate meetings were held by the registered inspector with school staff, with representatives of the school's links with the community, and with the governing body. The inspection team considered 53 responses from parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	545	20	106	69

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	38.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.3

Education support staff (Y7 - Y13)

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked each week	201

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	76
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	22
	KS4	20

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/9
	£
Total Income	1725171
Total Expenditure	1715171

Expenditure per pupil	2972.57
Balance brought forward from previous year	-333
Balance carried forward to next year	9667

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	448
Number of questionnaires returned:	53

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	30	57	13	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	47	42	7	2	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	22	46	24	6	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	24	48	21	5	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	46	41	4	7	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	41	41	9	7	2
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	35	50	13	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	34	53	9	4	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	31	41	20	4	4
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	21	52	20	7	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	35	41	15	4	5