

# INSPECTION REPORT

**The Robert Manning School**

Bourne

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique Reference Number: 120631

Inspection Number: 186349

Headteacher: Mr M S Kee

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Reporting inspector: Mrs J Greenfield

7070

Dates of inspection: 6 – 10 December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708193

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:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Edinburgh Crescent BOURNE Lincolnshire PE10 9DT
Telephone number:	(01778) 422365
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Poole
Date of previous inspection:	13 – 17 November 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs J Greenfield Registered Inspector	Special educational needs Vocational courses	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Accommodation Efficiency of the school Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Resources
Mr J Lovell Lay Inspector		
Mrs P Caspari	English and drama	
Mr B Espiner Mr N Pinkney Mr J Royle	Mathematics Science Information technology Music	
Mr M Elson	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mrs S Mansell Mr J Carnaghan	Design and technology History Equal opportunities	Staffing Assessment
Mr N Bertram Mr B Downes Mrs W Burke Mr J I'Anson	Geography Modern foreign languages Art Physical education	Sixth form Curriculum

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- The teaching is good overall and makes a considerable contribution to the good progress that most pupils make in their learning.
- The school has a positive ethos which successfully fosters and promotes good behaviour, constructive attitudes and friendly relationships amongst its pupils.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they receive effective support to help them improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills.
- The school has very good links with the local, especially business, community, which enable pupils to have access to valuable opportunities for work experience.
- It makes an effective contribution towards pupils' moral development.
- It provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities of high quality for the pupils.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Standards in geography and modern languages are not as high as in other subjects, and there is too much variation in performance between subjects in the GCSE examinations and also between boys and girls.
- II. The more able pupils are not challenged enough in some subjects and not all teachers ensure, where there is a wide range of attainment in the class, that the work is appropriate for all pupils. (*The lack of challenge was a key issue in the last inspection report.*)
- III. Assessment procedures lack consistency across subjects and assessment is not used sufficiently to inform planning or to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve.
- IV. It places insufficient emphasis on fostering pupils' spiritual development and aspects of their cultural development, particularly in introducing them to the richness and diversity of their own and other cultures. (*These aspects were a key issue in the last report.*)
- V. Monitoring and evaluating the work of the school is not systematic enough.
- VI. The uneven quality of the careers education and guidance given to pupils does not prepare them well enough for the next stage of their education or for their future careers.

**The Robert Manning School has a number of strengths which far outweigh its weaknesses. Many of the weaknesses have already been identified by the school and are being addressed although not always with sufficient urgency. 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 and guardians of pupils at the school.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made reasonable progress in implementing the key issues identified in the last report, but has not addressed them all with sufficient rigour or consistency. Pupils are given more opportunities to make decisions and take responsibility, particularly with regard to their own learning. Standards in mathematics have improved significantly and are now in line with national figures. All pupils receive their entitlement to religious education. Some attention has been given to improving the spiritual development of pupils, and to those aspects of cultural development which prepare pupils for living in a wider and more diverse community, but these aspects remain unsatisfactory. The higher attaining pupils are more adequately challenged than previously but strategies lack consistency across subjects and teachers. The monitoring of the educational outcomes of plans and policies is improving but needs to become more systematic and rigorous.

The school has shown that it has the capacity to improve what it does. However, it needs to have a clearer view of its priorities and targets for further development if it is to sustain and improve the consistency of its performance in the future, particularly in relation to pupils' attainment.

## Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and 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 <i>well below average</i> E
Key Stage 3 Tests	C	E	
GCSE Examinations	B	E*	
A/AS – levels	E	n/a	

Results in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 were better in English than in mathematics and science. The results for the three subjects are well below average when compared with similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). Considerable caution must be exercised in interpreting this information and drawing conclusions about the school's performance in relation to similar schools, as the benchmark category used (free school meals) does not accurately reflect the social and economic circumstances of its pupils or its situation within a selective system of education.

The GCSE results in 1999 (based on average of all the grades) were above average when compared with all schools nationally but were very low when compared with similar schools. As at Key Stage 3, the same cautions apply in interpreting the school's performance in relation to similar schools. The strongest subjects at GCSE in 1999 were physical education, design and technology (resistant materials), drama and religious studies; the weakest subjects were textiles, French, German, geography, history and art.

The A-level results in 1999 were not as good as those in 1998. Most students gained pass grades but relatively few attained the higher grades of A or B. The best results were in physical education/sports studies and chemistry, with around two-thirds of students in each subject gaining grades A or B. In the GNVQ courses, nearly all students gained at least a pass, and the majority with merit or distinction awards. Around three-fifths of the sixth form leavers went on to higher education.

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, mathematics, art, design and technology, history, physical education, religious education	-
Years 10-11	Good	English, mathematics, art, design and technology, physical education, religious education, drama, GNVQ	-



Sixth form	Good	English, mathematics, art, design and technology, history, physical education, religious education, drama	-
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons; in 62 per cent it is at least good; and in 13 per cent it is very good and occasionally excellent. There are examples of some very good teaching in a number of subjects. The teaching is more often good in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, physical education and religious education, and is at least satisfactory in the remaining subjects. This consistency in the teaching contributes to the good progress that the majority of pupils make in their learning. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurs in mathematics, art, design and technology, history, modern languages, physical education, personal and social education and in manufacturing.

*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**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Good: most pupils move in a sensible way around the school and although boisterous at times in the playground, their behaviour is generally good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory: attendance last year was below the national average and lower than in the previous year; the level of unauthorised absence has decreased in the past year.
Ethos*	Good: most pupils are keen to learn and have positive attitudes to their work; relationships throughout the school are very good and pupils are well supported by the staff; the school is committed to improving standards.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: the headteacher plays a prominent role in determining the educational direction for the work of the school; the senior management team and the governing body are extending their roles, particularly in monitoring aspects of the work of the school, but the monitoring arrangements are not as systematic or as consistent as is required to improve standards.
Curriculum	Satisfactory: the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum; the range and quality of extra-curricular opportunities are very good; careers education and guidance are unsatisfactory; the assessment procedures lack consistency across the school and are unsatisfactory.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good: the provision is well managed; pupils make satisfactory and often good progress in their learning, especially in their reading, writing and number skills, through the quality of the support they receive; in some subjects, pupils are not always given sufficient help to enable them to understand the work being covered.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good provision for pupils' moral development and satisfactory provision for their social development; unsatisfactory provision for their spiritual development and for their cultural development, although there are some areas of strength.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory overall: sufficient well qualified staff, with mostly good levels of learning support and technical staff (except for art and food

technology); accommodation is generally satisfactory but it is variable in quality and rather dispersed; resources are generally adequate, although there are some deficiencies in a few areas.

Value for money      Satisfactory: the school runs efficiently; it uses its resources effectively and is helping most pupils to make good progress through the good quality of much of the teaching, but their attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is too variable.

*\*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**

- VII. The school enables pupils to achieve a good standard of work.
- VIII. They find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with their children.
- IX. Their children like school.

### **What some parents are not happy about**

with the

concern  
effective

Inspectors' judgements generally support the positive views expressed by the parents but they are concerned about the undue variation in standards between subjects, particularly in GCSE examinations.

Inspectors found that homework is set regularly in most subjects and, for the most part, reinforces and extends classwork well but have concerns about the lack of a clear homework timetable which makes it difficult for many pupils to organise their time effectively and for parents to monitor the amount and consistency of the homework. Inspectors' findings indicate that senior staff deal with incidences of bullying discreetly and firmly.

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To improve and build upon the current performance of the school and improve standards, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- raise pupils' performance in the GCSE examinations to a more consistent level and closer to the national averages, by:
  - having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensuring that work for the lower attaining pupils is more carefully matched to meet their needs and that the higher attaining pupils are given more challenging work;
  - improving standards in geography and modern languages in particular;
  - making more consistent use of data relating to the relative performance of boys and girls and using this information more effectively within departments to inform teaching;
  - extending the role of senior managers and subject leaders, using more consistent criteria and approaches, in monitoring and evaluating the work of departments.

*[Paragraphs: 11; 13; 14; 15; 22; 37; 38; 39; 50; 58; 72; 75; 77; 79; 142; 143; 156; 157; 165; 166; 167; 169; 170; 174]*

- improve the consistency of assessment practice throughout the school, by:
  - extending the existing policy statement to give clearer guidance to staff;
  - implementing a common marking system;
  - using assessment information more systemically to inform teachers' planning, curricular planning and the next stage of learning for individual pupils;
  - monitoring more regularly, and evaluating the effectiveness of, the school's assessment procedures.

*[Paragraphs: 42; 49; 50; 51; 52; 107; 158; 181]*

- improve the provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development, by:
  - using assemblies more positively to develop these aspects of their personal development;
  - providing guidance to staff and ensuring that subject departments are aware of their role in fostering pupils' spiritual and cultural development;
  - preparing pupils more effectively for living in a wider and more diverse society.

*[Paragraphs: 53; 56; 57; 72]*

- tighten the existing procedures and practices for monitoring and evaluating aspects of the school's work at all levels of management to ensure that they are consistent and systematic, and that the outcomes of monitoring are used more effectively to improve performance.

*[Paragraphs: 72; 75; 79; 91; 122]*

- improve the quality and consistency of the careers education and guidance available to pupils.

*[Paragraphs: 47]*

- ensure that statutory requirements are met in the following areas:
  - provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils;
  - the completion of registers;
  - the content of the school prospectus and the annual report to parents.

*[Paragraphs: 30; 53; 60; 74]*

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan:

- provide a homework timetable for pupils so they can manage their work more effectively and parents can monitor the work their child does at home; [42; 64; 106]
- improve the leadership of the sixth form and ensure that pupils are appropriately supported and encouraged to make a bigger contribution to the work of the school; [44; 55; 58; 75]
- as soon as resources allow, address the deficiencies in some of the school's accommodation. [86; 87; 132; 140; 181; 200; 208]

# INTRODUCTION

## Characteristics of the school

1. The Robert Manning School is a slightly larger than average 11-18 comprehensive school, with 1028 pupils on roll, 135 of whom are in the sixth form. The school was awarded Technology College status in September 1999. Numbers on roll have increased quite considerably since 1994 and are projected to rise again next year. The school, which is situated close to the centre of the small town of Bourne, operates within a selective system of education and most of the higher attaining pupils in the area attend the local grammar school.

2. From the standardised tests taken in Year 7, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is slightly below average, particularly in their literacy and numeracy skills. Although designated a comprehensive school, the school has a smaller proportion of higher attaining pupils than usually found in similar schools and there is a greater proportion of lower attaining pupils. One hundred and sixty eight pupils (16.3 per cent) are on the school's Register of special educational needs which, as a proportion of the total school population, is broadly in line with the national average. Of these, 39 pupils have a statement of special educational need, which proportionally is well above the national average. The school receives additional funding from the local education authority as it has a designated unit for pupils with general learning difficulties.

3. A significant minority of pupils are from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds, both socially and economically. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, which has decreased over the past few years, is around 3.4 per cent, a figure that is well below average by national standards. Unemployment is low in the area but the level of family income is also fairly low. Many pupils come from small, often isolated, rural communities and have little access to wider cultural and social opportunities. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, at 0.78 per cent, is very low, and only one pupil comes from a home where English is not the first language. No pupil is supported under the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant funding arrangements. Around three-fifths of pupils continue in full-time education at the end of Year 11 and a similar proportion of students enter higher education at the end of the sixth form.

4. The school's overall aims are to enable pupils to achieve the highest academic standards possible and achieve their full potential. It seeks to do this through providing a broad, challenging curriculum, underpinned by high quality teaching and varied learning methods, within an environment in which pupils are valued as individuals.

5. The school's main priorities for the coming year, outlined in the development plan, include a focus on improving: the quality of teaching and learning; the development of the school's facilities and opportunities for information and communications technology; and development of curricular collaboration with contributory primary schools and neighbouring secondary schools. In addition, there are plans to improve the school's accommodation and resources. The school has set appropriate targets as required for improving the academic standards attained by pupils.

6. **Key indicators**

**Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	84	79	163

<b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	47	52	48
	Girls	69	50	45
	Total	116	102	93
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	71 (75)	63 (68)	57 (65)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	28 (26)	39 (36)	17 (23)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	52	54	50
	Girls	65	58	53
	Total	117	112	103
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (67)	69 (64)	63 (68)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	31 (25)	45 (42)	28 (29)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

*Note: the figures for the numbers of registered pupils are based on School Census (Form 7) information and may differ slightly from those used to calculate the percentage of pupils reaching the threshold levels.*

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

## Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	77	68	145

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 Girls Total	28 36 64	73 67 140	73 67 140
Percentage achieving standard specified	School National	43 (43) 46.3 (44.6)	97 (92) 90.7 (89.8)	97 (97) 95.7 (95.2)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of <i>such pupils</i> who achieved all those they studied:	Number	% Success rate
	School National	0 n/a n/a

## Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>3</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1999	19	28	47

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	11.8	11.9	13.1 (14.2)	3.7	2.8	3.1 (4.0)
National	n/a	n/a	17.9 (17.6)	n/a	n/a	2.8 (2.8)

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved this qualification:	Number	% Success rate
	School National	0 n/a 82.5

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% Success rate
	School National	82 88 81.7

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

3 Percentages 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:	Authorised Absence	School	%
		National comparative data	9.5
	Unauthorised Absence	School	7.9
		National comparative data	0.4

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## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:	Fixed period	Number
		26
	Permanent	0

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## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:	Very good or better	%
		13
	Satisfactory or better	96
	Less than satisfactory	4

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

7. Pupils enter the school with their overall levels of attainment slightly below those of pupils of the same age in similar schools nationally. Their reading, writing and number skills are generally below average. The outcomes of the cognitive abilities tests, which pupils take on entry into the school, indicate that, in all years, their scores are lower than average and that they do better on the non-verbal tests than on the verbal and quantitative tests. However, in 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 or above in the end of Key Stage 2 national tests in English, mathematics and science was broadly in line with the national average in all three subjects, showing an improvement over previous years.

8. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard of Level 5 or above was above the national average in English, and broadly in line with the average in mathematics and science. In English, this reflects the situation in 1998 when the results at Level 5 or above were also above the national average. In mathematics and science, however, the 1999 results are not as high as those for 1998 when they were also above average. The girls outperformed the boys by a high margin in the English tests in both 1998 and 1999, and in mathematics in 1998. Their performance was more even in mathematics in 1999 and also in science in both years. At Level 6 or above, the results in 1999 were close to the national averages in all three subjects. Since 1996, the school's results in these three core subjects, but particularly in English, have shown some improvement, although not consistently from year to year. Some of these variations in performance can be attributed to the lower attainment levels of the different cohorts as indicated by their cognitive abilities test scores. Based on the average points score, the results in 1999 were close to the national average in each subject and for all three subjects together, reflecting the position in 1998.

9. There are particular difficulties in comparing the school's results with similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, and caution must be exercised in reaching conclusions about the school's performance in the end of Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations. The school is within a selective system in which most of the higher attaining pupils attend the local grammar school. Consequently, even though designated a comprehensive school because it takes the full range of ability, it has fewer higher attaining pupils and a correspondingly higher proportion of lower attaining pupils than usual. The school also has a much higher proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need than average. Although few pupils are eligible for free school meals, the low level of family income, when compared with national statistics, means that a significant minority of pupils are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In view of its comprehensive intake, any comparison with the figures for secondary modern schools is also inappropriate. When compared with the benchmarks of schools that have a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, performance in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 at Level 5 or above, and based on the average points score, was well below average in English, and very low in mathematics and science. This picture is not an accurate reflection of the school's performance in the light of its particular social circumstances or its position within a selective system of education.

10. From the evidence of their school work, pupils' attainment in English by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the standard expected for 14 year olds, with a significant minority attaining higher standards, and broadly reflects the results of the Key Stage 3 tests in 1999. In mathematics and science, their attainment by the end of the key stage is in line with the standard expected nationally, reflecting the test results in 1999. In other subjects, pupils' attainments by the end of the key stage in art, design and

technology, history, information technology, music, physical education and religious education are in line with the standards expected nationally for 14 year olds. In geography, their attainment is slightly below the standard expected nationally, especially in their skills of analysing and interpreting evidence. Pupils' attainment is also below expectations in modern foreign languages, with weaknesses in their speaking skills and, in particular, their writing skills. No significant differences were evident between the performance of boys and girls in their general classwork in most subjects, other than in geography where the girls' meticulous attention to detail and standards of presentation are at a higher level than those of the boys, and in modern foreign languages where girls achieve higher standards than the boys. When compared with the judgements made in the last inspection report, standards by the end of Key Stage 3 have remained broadly the same in most subjects, have improved in mathematics and design and technology, but are lower in geography and modern languages.

11. In the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C was below the national average, remaining at the same level as the figure for 1998, which was close to the average. Based on the average figure for the previous three years (1996-1998), the school's performance has also been below the national average. Over that period, however, there has been considerable improvement at 5 or more grades A\*-C from 29 per cent in 1996 to the current figure of 43 per cent. At five or more grades A\*-G, the 1999 results were well above the national average, and showed considerable improvement over the figures for the previous year. Based on the average points score, the overall results for 1999 were above the national average and showed some improvement over the figure for 1998. Since the last inspection, the overall trend in pupils' attainments, based on the average points score, has shown a rising trend at a faster rate than the national average.

12. When compared with schools with pupils from a similar background, the results were very low at five or more grades A\*-C and for the average points score, but were average at five or more grades A\*-G. As with the Key Stage 3 results, this comparison is not an accurate reflection of the school's social circumstance or its situation within a selective system of education.

13. There are undue variations in the results in the different subjects and a lack of consistency in subject performance from year to year. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was above the national averages in design and technology (resistant materials), drama, physical education and religious studies, broadly in line with the average in English literature, mathematics, science and graphics, but below the national averages in the remaining subjects, including English language, art and design, geography, history, music, textiles, food technology, French and German.

14. There are considerable differences between the performance of boys and girls in the 1999 GCSE examinations. In 1999, the girls outperformed the boys in nearly every subject other than in drama, music and religious education, and in mathematics and history where performance was more even.

15. Current and recent work indicates that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the standard expected nationally in English, mathematics, science, history, information technology, physical education, religious education and drama, is above the standard expected in art, design and technology and music but is below the expected standard in geography and modern languages. Many pupils at Key Stage 4, as well as at Key Stage 3, do not have a well-developed grasp of the basics of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The significant variations between the performance of boys and girls seen in the GCSE examinations are reflected in their work in a few subjects, including English and modern languages. In relation to the judgements made in the last inspection report, standards have remained at the same level in English, science, history, information technology, drama and physical education, but have improved in mathematics, design and technology, music and religious education.

16. The average points score for students entered for two or more GCSE A-level examinations in 1999 was well below the national average and was lower than the school's performance in 1998, when it was below average. All pupils entered for art and design, biology, chemistry, design and technology, geography, history, physical education/sports studies and music gained grades A-E, although the numbers entered in some of these subjects were too small to make comparisons with national figures very meaningful. A small number of students in many subjects gained the higher grades of A and B. In the GNVQ Advanced courses in Leisure and Tourism and Business, all students gained at least pass awards, and the majority merit or distinction. Their performance was better than the national average.

17. In the sixth form, students' current and past work indicates that their attainment by the end of the two year course is above expectations in art, music, physical education and in the GNVQ courses, is in line with course expectations in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history and modern languages, but is below the standard expected in religious education. Insufficient evidence is available to make clear judgements about students' attainment in other subjects, mainly because of the very small numbers taking the courses. Similarly, because of the small numbers, it is not possible to make any valid comparison between standards at the time of the last inspection and currently.

18. Throughout the school, pupils speak confidently and well, and enjoy opportunities for discussion. They learn technical terminology well and use it correctly in science, design and technology and geography. When showing visitors around the school, they converse with ease. Listening is good throughout the school. Where it is particularly necessary to listen carefully to practical instructions, as in design and technology, physical education and science, pupils listen patiently, politely and attentively. Pupils read well and, although many enter the school with a reading age below that of their chronological age, they make rapid progress in improving their reading skills. Pupils read for pleasure and quite a few think the library is a favourite part of the school. In English, reading loud is often done with intelligence, comprehension and expression. Opportunities for reading aloud occur often in religious education, history, geography, mathematics, and design and technology. Pupils' writing skills are not as well developed, although there are some pupils and students who write to a very high standard. Handwriting is generally legible. The main weakness is poor spelling which, for a significant number of pupils, remains with them through most, if not all, of their school life. Presentation of work ranges from impressive, even beautiful, to very poor. It is best in some folders and in some wall displays.

19. Pupils' skills of numeracy are satisfactory and are sufficient for them to use and apply mathematics as needed to support their work in other areas of the curriculum. Information technology, as a tool for learning, is used effectively across the curriculum to support and enhance pupils' learning.

20. Overall, the majority of pupils are making good progress across subjects of the curriculum. There is very little differences between the key stages and only in a small number of lessons is their progress less than satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress overall in English, mathematics, art, information technology, history, and religious education and satisfactory progress in the remaining subjects. At Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress in a number of subjects including English, mathematics, art, design and technology, information technology, music and religious education, and satisfactory progress in the remainder. In the sixth form, students are making satisfactory and more often good progress in lessons and over time across the subjects that they study. Their progress is particularly good in design and technology, is good in English, mathematics, science, art, history, information technology, music, modern languages, and in the GNVQ courses, and is satisfactory in the remaining subjects.

21. There are several reasons why a significant minority of pupils are making good and occasionally very good progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. The most

important of these is the generally good quality of over half of the teaching. In addition, most teachers plan their lessons well and use a variety of approaches to stimulate and motivate pupils. Together, these factors have an impact on the progress that pupils make. In the small number of lessons where pupils fail to make sufficient progress, this is almost always due to the unsatisfactory quality of the teaching. Although there were considerable differences between the performance of boys and girls in the Key Stage 3 tests and the GCSE examinations, in most subjects there were no significant differences noted in the progress made by boys and girls in lessons, in their class books or other work. However, in some instances, boys do not concentrate as well as they might.

22. The average attaining pupils are generally making better progress than some of the higher and lower attaining pupils, mainly because the work in a number of subjects does not always meet the specific needs of these groups enough. In history at Key Stage 4, for example, the teaching fails to address the wide attainment level of the mixed ability classes so that the higher and lower attaining pupils do not always make as much progress as might be expected. In modern languages, the higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough and have little extension work if they finish quickly.

23. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs generally make at least satisfactory progress across subjects of the curriculum and in meeting the targets in the individual education plans. Where they receive additional support, they make good progress. This is especially true in language and literacy work at both key stages. Pupils withdrawn for additional work in reading comprehension, spelling and numeracy also make good progress in improving their skills.

#### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

24. Pupils' attitudes to work are generally good throughout the school and make a significant contribution to the mostly good progress that they make in their learning. The great majority of pupils are well motivated and keen to be successful in school. They arrive promptly to lessons, respond well to the teacher's instructions and apply themselves appropriately to their tasks. The vast majority of pupils sustain their concentration and are cooperative in the classroom, contributing well to discussions. They voluntarily attend the homework clubs and use information technology equipment effectively for their projects. Their capacity for independent work increases as they progress through the school and many make good use of the facilities available in the school library. A small number of pupils in Year 7 have not yet developed the habit of listening and occasionally are slow to settle. At Key Stage 3, some lower attaining pupils, with a short attention span, have occasional lapses in concentration but resume their work when checked by the teacher. Sixth form students are mature and show a high level of commitment to their studies.

25. Pupils with special educational needs, many of whom have considerable behavioural, attention and learning difficulties, have positive attitudes to their learning and respond well to the support they are given. They are willing and often keen to respond to questions and also ready to ask questions. At times, some have difficulty in focusing for long periods on tasks, but the good use of support staff, the sensitive handling of their inattention, and the variety of tasks that they are usually given, minimises these difficulties.

26. Behaviour in and around the school is generally good. Corridors are very narrow for the throng moving through them between lessons and the numbers of pupils are too great for the rule of walking on the left to be always practicable. Although there is some pushing at times, pupils show very good humour in trying circumstances. In the playground, there is occasional boisterous behaviour but it is good-natured and relationships remain for the most part good. Pupils and parents indicate that there is some bullying. On the occasions when bullying occurs, it is discreetly but firmly handled. Younger pupils are alert about this matter and know how to proceed should they encounter it. The school's system of rewards and punishments is well understood. For serious breaches of discipline, the school excludes pupils on a temporary or permanent basis. There have been no permanent exclusions this year.

or last year, and the number of fixed term exclusions, most commonly for continuous misbehaviour, is in line with that found nationally in schools of a similar size and type. In the dining hall, pupils choose where to sit and often mix across years, sometimes sitting with members of their family. At lunchtime, behaviour is orderly and pupils are courteous, without the need for intensive supervision. Although pupils congregate outside, even in wet weather, the community remains peaceful. Pupils are trustworthy. Property and equipment are respected and there is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti around the school, although after break and lunchtime there are areas where litter has been dropped.

27. Relationships throughout the school are very good, constructive and purposeful. Pupils respect the staff and regard them mostly as friends. Their ability to listen attentively promotes understanding between pupils and leads them to show sensitivity to the feelings, views and beliefs of others. Those with disabilities, some of whom are wheelchair bound, are very well integrated into the school community and are fully included into its society. The majority of pupils work well in groups or alone and show persistence when tasks are difficult. They are quick to help one another and are sympathetic when their peers encounter problems. This is a particular feature of subjects such as physical education, drama and music where group work relies on mutual trust and teamwork.

28. Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided for their personal development and for taking on roles of responsibility. Since the last inspection, teachers have been encouraged to devise schemes of work to enable pupils, especially in Key Stage 3, to take more responsibility for planning their own learning. Students in Year 12 create and present assemblies for younger pupils, as for example in some scenes on the topic of bullying for pupils in Year 7. After this performance, individual students sat with groups of younger pupils to discuss the issues raised in their presentation. Other sixth formers were preparing to enact Victorian scenes for a local primary school to show how life has changed over the century. Pupils in Year 11 monitor lateness and take this responsibility very seriously. Further opportunities for pupils' personal and social development are provided by the very good range of extra-curricular activities available in the form of sport, social events, clubs, dramatic productions, visits abroad and excursions. These are mostly well attended. The good standards found in pupils' attitudes and behaviour at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

## **Attendance**

29. Pupils' attendance is below the national average. During 1998/99, the last reporting year for which there are national figures, the overall attendance level was 90.1 per cent, lower than the figure for the previous year when it was 92.1 per cent. The rate of unauthorised absence at 0.4 per cent was well below the national average, and lower than the figure of 1.0 per cent the previous year. The majority of authorised absences occur as a result of illness, medical visits and holidays. These levels of attendance have a positive effect on the progress that pupils make in their learning.

30. At the start of each session, registration is conducted efficiently but in many instances, throughout the school, registers are not fully completed at registration time and therefore do not comply with regulations. This was an issue identified in the last inspection and has not been addressed adequately.

31. Staff and pupils arrive in classrooms punctually and lessons begin on time. Movement between lessons is purposeful. Attendance is accurately and efficiently recorded in lessons and any concerns are followed up.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

32. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is generally consistent across both key stages and in the sixth form, although there are some variations both within and across subjects. The good quality of the teaching makes a significant contribution to the predominately good progress that pupils make in their learning. The school has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching since the last inspection, reducing the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching from around 20 per cent in 1995 to around four per cent in 1999. Over the same period, the proportion of good or better teaching has increased from just under 50 per cent to around 63 per cent. These improvements are due for the most part to the emphasis that the school has placed on developing strategies for improving teaching and learning, the sharing of good practice and the specific action taken by the school to tackle underperformance. Most teachers are now matching the work more carefully to meet the pupils' needs and providing more challenging work, especially at Key Stage 3, both of which were weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. However, weaknesses still remain.

33. The teaching is at least satisfactory in all but a comparatively small proportion of lessons. Slightly less than three-fifths of the teaching is good or better at Key Stage 3, with a marginally higher proportion than this at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, the teaching is never less than satisfactory, and in nearly four out of five lessons, it is good or very good. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching between the year groups, but there is a slightly higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, at around nine per cent, in Year 7, and a slightly higher proportion of good or very good teaching in Year 9, Year 10, and in the sixth form than elsewhere. There are no clear reasons why this should be so.

34. The teaching throughout the school is more often good in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, physical education and religious education, in history and music at Key Stage 3, and in history, modern languages and music in the sixth form. In the remaining subjects, the teaching is generally satisfactory overall.

35. There are examples of some very good teaching in a number of subjects, including science, design and technology, physical education and religious education across both key stages, and also in English, mathematics, art, geography, history and drama at Key Stage 3, and in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs in their numeracy and life skills lessons in Key Stage 4 and when withdrawn for specific help to improve their reading and writing skills. In the sixth form, some very good teaching also occurs at times in English, science, art, and design and technology. In these lessons, pupils make particularly good progress in their learning. Some excellent teaching occurs at times in physical education and religious education at Key Stage 3.

36. Where pupils make the best progress, teachers use the following strategies consistently and well. They plan and structure the work thoroughly to ensure that time in lessons is not wasted, set out clearly, and share with pupils, the learning intentions of the lesson, and provide a variety of tasks to challenge and stimulate pupils' thinking and help them learn. In the most effective lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge very effectively to ensure that the work is pitched at an appropriately challenging level, as for example in a Year 11 science lesson on genetics and evolution. In such lessons, teachers make very good use of open-ended questioning to explore pupils' understanding and to make them reflect and think more critically. This strategy was particularly effective in a Year 13 sociology lesson on the topic of education, in a Year 7 geography lesson on climate and weather, and in a Year 10 lesson in physical education lesson on fitness. In all these lessons, teachers start promptly, set a brisk pace to the lesson, and ensure that time is not wasted.

37. The weaknesses in the small number of unsatisfactory lessons are varied. They stem mainly from unclear aims, low expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, as in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, long rambling introductions which slow the pace of the lesson, as in a Year 8 art lesson and in a Year 9 modern languages lesson, and, occasionally, the teacher's insecure subject

knowledge or lack of familiarity with the requirements of the National Curriculum, as in one art lesson. The tasks sometimes limit the standards that pupils can attain, as for example in a Year 7 food technology lesson, the work is insufficiently matched to meet the range of attainment in the class, as in a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, and the resources provided are too difficult for many pupils in the class, as observed in history lessons in Year 7 and Year 10.

38. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs by subject teachers is satisfactory overall, but when they are withdrawn for small group or individual work with the special educational needs department, the teaching is good. Most teachers use the pupils' individual education plans effectively to provide them with appropriate work but this is not sufficiently consistent across the school. Support assistants contribute to the planning of lessons and discuss individual needs with class teachers either at the beginning of lessons or at the beginning of a new unit or topic of work. This helps to ensure that the support is effectively focused on addressing the targets in each pupil's individual education plan. However, many teachers do not provide work that is well enough matched to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and, consequently, at times, they have difficulty in reading some of the work sheets and textbooks that are provided and in understanding some of the specific terminology. In such instances, pupils make less progress than they are capable of making.

39. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good, although there are weaknesses in a small number of areas, including food technology and art. In the most successful lessons, they use this knowledge effectively to provide work to stimulate, motivate and challenge their pupils. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are broadly satisfactory, and in a number of subjects good. In the best teaching, teachers expect pupils to learn, and instil high standards of accuracy, the correct use of technical language and have a strong focus on developing pupils' literacy skills. This was particularly evident in a Year 7 history lesson on the Roman Empire. In a few subjects, for example in modern languages, physical education and food technology, the work does not always make sufficient demands on the higher attaining pupils or fully meet the needs of some of the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.

40. Most lessons are carefully planned, and have clear purposes to ensure that pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding progressively. The planning of food technology is unsatisfactory, due to some uncertainty about the nature of the subject within the current curriculum. Planning is generally good in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography and history in Key Stage 4, and in science, art and history at Key Stage 3.

41. Most teachers use a satisfactory range of teaching and organisational strategies, appropriate to the subject and to the content being covered, to interest pupils and ensure that they make progress. In the majority of lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace to ensure that the time is used effectively. However, in some English lessons teachers talk for too long and do not allow pupils sufficient opportunity to contribute, insufficient time is allowed at the end of some lessons in science to review work, and time is wasted in some lessons in modern languages. Resources are generally used satisfactorily to support pupils' learning.

42. Nearly all teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and, in the majority of lessons, manage their behaviour effectively through making their expectations clear and ensuring that pupils respond appropriately. Teachers praise and encourage pupils and give them constructive and positive feedback on their performance. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory in all subjects, but is less evident in music at Key Stage 3, with insufficient evaluation of pupils' progress at the end of lessons. Marking is mostly undertaken regularly, although not with a common system across subjects, and there are examples of good standards of marking in English, science and religious education. In the best marking, pupils benefit from constructive comments and clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. Homework is set regularly in most subjects, but the lack of a



specific homework timetable, a concern raised by parents, makes it difficult for pupils to plan and manage their work.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

43. The curriculum, which meets statutory requirements, is generally broad and balanced at both key stages and in the sixth form, and effectively promotes pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. Overall, the curriculum provides a satisfactory preparation for the next stage of pupils' education and for adult life. As yet, there is insufficient evidence to make judgements about the impact which Technology College status is having on the school's curriculum. The time allocated to the curriculum exceeds that recommended for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Pupils at Key Stage 3 follow all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. At Key Stage 4, all pupils follow a core curriculum of English, mathematics, science, technology, a modern language and in addition choose from a number of other subjects including a range of General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) Part 1 courses at Foundation and Intermediate levels. This range of opportunities ensures that all pupils have access to courses that are relevant to their particular needs and aspirations. The small group of pupils studying a second modern language start their course at the beginning of Year 10 and the time allocated for the two languages is very tight to enable them to reach high grades in the GCSE examinations in both. All pupils follow a well-structured course in personal, social and health education at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Sex education and health education are taught as part of this course, as well as in science lessons, and there is appropriate provision for drugs awareness education.

44. Students in the sixth form have access to a comparatively wide range of A-level and AS courses, including English, mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, psychology, history, geography, general studies, sociology, sport studies, French, music, performing arts, design and technology, art and design, and religious studies, a range of GNVQ courses at Intermediate and Advanced levels in health and social care, business, manufacturing, and leisure and tourism, an NVQ Level 2 course in engineering and additional or optional language units in French or German. Before joining the sixth form, students are interviewed and an appropriate programme, based on prior attainment in the school and the student's future aspirations, is agreed. Supplementary studies for all sixth form students include a varied and valuable course covering personal and social development. The provision for religious education, in which students have whole-day experiences of different religions, including the Jewish experience of the holocaust, meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus, which was not the case during the last inspection. Although provision for the sixth form curriculum has improved since the last inspection, opportunities to participate in a broader range of activities and experiences, to extend students' horizons and contribute to their personal development, are insufficiently well established.

45. Pupils generally have satisfactory equality of access to the curriculum, but there are some inevitable restrictions placed on some pupils by the organisation of the option choices. Students in the sixth form may not have equal access to drama and English courses because of the timetable arrangements. The blocking arrangements between technology and modern languages in the Key Stage 4 options system limit the choices available for some pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 wishing to study technology. In physical education, however, the imbalance in numbers between boys and girls is effectively addressed through sensitive grouping arrangements to provide better balance.

46. The planning of the curriculum, to ensure that pupils' learning develops systematically from year to year, is good in Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. There is good practice in religious education, science and physical education, but planning from year to year to ensure that work builds on previous learning in English during Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. There is also uneven provision for art in Key Stage 3 when non-specialist teachers are teaching the subject. Overall, the department handbooks and schemes of work are satisfactory. There is no clear continuity in the scheme of work for music, but there are detailed schemes of work in modern languages, science,

design and technology, mathematics and geography.

47. Overall, the quality of provision for careers advice and guidance is unsatisfactory. In Key Stages 3 and 4, careers education is undertaken as part of the personal and social education programme and, whilst there are examples of good work being done, the teaching is inconsistent both in quality and in ensuring continuity. Pupils in Year 10, for example, have had little careers advice for several months. During their time in the sixth form, students receive advice about possible future career pathways but this is mainly targeted towards university entrance. Students do not view this advice as being impartial or well informed. Insufficient emphasis is placed on ensuring that students have access to high quality advice and sustained support to enable them to make informed choices about their future careers. The careers library has a satisfactory range of resources and is open to pupils and students at lunchtimes and after school as well as during the day. The work experience programme, for pupils in Year 10, is well organised and the school has good links with local industries that enhance the provision.

48. The school makes very good provision for extra-curricular activities, including sport, both at lunchtime and after school. Full use is made of the leisure centre on the school site during the day and early evening. A number of subjects offer revision classes and there is a range of activities, including music and drama, Sci Fi Club, a book club, French, geography and sociology. A variety of sporting activities is available including trampolining, badminton, football, rugby, basketball, hockey, aerobics and netball. It is estimated that over 35 per cent of pupils take part in sporting activities.

49. Assessment in the school lacks effective coordination and consistency. The school has a published assessment policy, which was drawn up in curricular meetings earlier in the year. It is an aspirational document, setting generalised aims, towards which the school aims to work. The senior manager with responsibility for assessment has started to investigate the wide range of procedures currently undertaken and plans to meet with each head of department to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision. The lack of monitoring of this area in previous years means that there are considerable inconsistencies in assessment practice between subjects. This situation allows anomalies to occur, for example the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in history in 1999 were clearly inaccurate, but the school failed to act on this situation early enough to prevent their dissemination and publication. Assessment is thorough and accurate in science, modern languages, design and technology and mathematics but has weaknesses in English and history, where there are no effective systems in place, and music where appraising and assessing of compositions is not done. In the remaining subjects, assessment procedures are generally satisfactory although they lack consistency.

50. Pupils take standardised tests on entry to the school and the scores from these tests and the resulting predictions for GCSE results are recorded and disseminated to departments. The way in which these are used is then left to heads of department. Some subjects, like art, find the predictions for pupils' attainment at the end of Year 11 inaccurate and so ignore them. Others use the data to calculate 'value added' in analysing their GCSE results. This information is also used to develop targets for pupils. Again, there are inconsistencies in target setting due to a lack of monitoring. Most targets for pupils are imprecise and so fail to affect pupils' attainment positively. Most pupils in Key Stage 4 know their targets but they are not written in their diaries, not consistently included in school reports and not generally known to parents. Target setting in the sixth form courses varies from subject to subject and can lack specificity. One sixth form pupil commented that his target in one subject was 'to get 59% in my exam' but was unaware of how to go about this.

51. Where subjects have developed thorough assessment procedures, the data generated feeds back effectively into curriculum planning. Practice across the school, however, is inconsistent. Assessment arrangements in mathematics are very good. In design and technology, the assessment at the end of each unit of work in Key Stage 3 leads to a regular review of schemes of work, and in the same department good individual targets are negotiated with sixth form students as a result of assessments undertaken. Practice in science is also good where results of all assessments are analysed and regularly used to inform planning of the curriculum and its delivery. There are weaknesses in other areas. For

example, targets are set in the marking of work in religious education but they are not part of a strategy to measure progress and attainment against the outcomes specified in the agreed syllabus. In English, assessment is insufficiently used to inform teaching and planning. The school has a marking policy but this is a flexible document giving only general guidelines. Pupils report, and a scrutiny of their work supports this view, that marking approaches throughout the school have wide variations between subjects with a mixture in the types of grading used. They find this confusing.

52. Since the last inspection the variations in marking have remained and many school reports still lack precise guidance about how pupils might improve their work. The consistency, noted in the arrangements for assessment, has declined since that time.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

53. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development shows emerging strengths, but current provision is unsatisfactory. The strongest contribution comes from religious education, which enables pupils to explore and express the deepest beliefs and values in human life. Science and art also create good opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to respond reflectively to what they learn. Across the rest of the curriculum, most teachers receive and value pupils' ideas, but do not use them sufficiently to promote pupils' insight into their own lives as young people and future adults. In assemblies and tutorial time, the school has begun to move away from presenting adult beliefs and values and towards engaging them in their own exploration of life's meaning and purpose. Moments of silent reflection are used in assemblies, but not all teachers have the required skills and expertise to use such moments effectively. Opportunities exist to develop a link between what goes on in assembly and what pupils learn about themselves in religious education. However, the school does not fulfil the statutory requirements to have a daily act of collective worship, a key issue identified in the last inspection report.

54. The school's provision for pupils' moral development is good. Commitment to moral values is embedded in the school's policies and in its practices. Teachers are good role models and uphold the virtues of honesty, fairness and respect for the truth. Religious education frequently provides very good opportunities for pupils to learn the principles which distinguish right from wrong, especially at Key Stage 4. In a range of other subjects, moral issues are given sensitive consideration. When issues of social morality arise in the tutorial programme of personal and social education, as seen for example in Year 8, the quality of the tutors' input did not fully engage pupils' interest. But here, and across the other subjects of the curriculum, the provision for pupils' moral development is never less than satisfactory.

55. The school's contribution to pupils' social development is satisfactory. Many opportunities occur across the curriculum for pupils to work collaboratively in pairs or groups. Opportunities for pupils to develop initiative and independence, by making decisions and taking responsibility for their own learning, occur in most subjects but insufficiently in modern foreign languages and history. Provision for pupils with special educational needs ensures that they feel valued within the school and so can continue to mature emotionally and socially. Pupils report that they find some behaviour in the corridors unacceptably boisterous and they regret that there is no forum, such as a school council, in which issues of immediate relevance to their lives can be discussed. There are also insufficient opportunities for sixth form students to exercise responsibility in the corporate life of the school by working, for example, with the pastoral team or on the tutorial programme.

56. There are strengths in the school's contribution to pupils' cultural development, but overall provision is unsatisfactory. The school's policies affirm its commitment to the promotion in pupils of appreciation of their own and other cultures. In religious education, pupils receive good teaching about both Christianity and the other major religions of the world. In English, pupils read texts from a wide range of English-speaking cultures. In design and technology and in art, pupils are given opportunities

to extend their horizons but, in history and music, opportunities are missed and these subjects have little impact on this aspect of pupils' personal development. In other areas of the curriculum and in the corporate life of the school, opportunities are also missed to enhance pupils' cultural experiences. Assemblies lack the stimulus given by well-presented visual or musical input. Visits, visitors and the internet are insufficiently used to introduce pupils to the richness and diversity of their own and other cultures.

57. The school's contribution to pupils' personal development has both strengths and weaknesses, but the overall provision is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the promotion of pupils' moral development has remained a strength. There has been progress in the school's response to the key issues identified in the last inspection report. For example, pupils at Key Stage 3 now have more opportunities to take responsibility for managing their own learning, but in other aspects of school life opportunities to develop socially are missing. There has been little progress in the provision for pupils' cultural development, which remains an area of weakness. The school's contribution to pupils' spiritual development has been greatly enhanced by the improved provision of religious education. Progress on collective worship has been slow, but significant, and further improvement will require additional attention and support.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

58. As at the time of the last inspection, the school, which is a caring and supportive community, provides a secure environment for its pupils. Teachers and staff set high standards for pupils' response and act as good role models. Pupils feel that they are well supported and are confident in approaching staff with any problems. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and their personal development are supported by an effective tutor system, which enables information to be shared amongst staff for the benefit of pupils. Some strategies for supporting the higher attaining pupils have been developed, although they are not embedded in all departmental practice. Since the last inspection, some pupils have been involved in higher-level examination work, and early entry for the GCSE examination in mathematics has been re-introduced. The senior management team and head of upper school have implemented a scheme for mentoring groups of pupils at Key Stage 4, particularly with regard to their academic studies. However, there has been insufficient analysis of the programme to provide an evaluation of its effect upon pupils' progress and attainment or to inform future development. Teachers have a sound understanding of pupils' progress, both academic and personal, and are effective in promoting discipline and good behaviour. They provide opportunities for personal development which extend as pupils move through the school, although these are insufficiently developed in the sixth form. Support is provided to enable pupils to benefit from the educational opportunities offered by the school. Outside specialists from the education service, careers service and social services, together with specialists such as the emotional behaviour support service and psychologists, provide good support for pupils.

59. Staff are familiar with the school's procedures for child protection, which are good. The school uses the local area child protection committee policy and the senior member of staff with responsibility for child protection recently undertook an extensive training course as part of a multi-agency group. Staff also receive in-service training on the application of the guidelines. The school exercises its responsibilities with care and sensitivity and has a good understanding of the issues which potentially affect individual pupils. A policy relating to the use of physical restraint of pupils in appropriate circumstances is currently in draft form but has yet to be agreed by governors.

60. The monitoring and promoting of attendance are good. All cases of absence and lateness are followed up with pupils and parents to identify the reasons. The school encourages parents to take holidays outside term time. Detailed records are maintained for those pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern and strategies are implemented to provide support. In some cases, off-site education is funded by the school. Pupils who are absent for medical reasons over extended periods are provided

with work, which is sent or faxed home. The education welfare officer visits the school weekly and liaises with staff, following up any cases of concern. Class registers are taken and the whereabouts of missing pupils are followed up. However, statutory requirements are not fully met as registers are not always completed during registration.

61. Teachers have clear expectations of standards of behaviour and the school's discipline policy is applied consistently and is well understood by pupils. It includes a system of rewards and sanctions, including detention. Pupils who misbehave regularly may be put onto 'report' as part of a behaviour modification programme. The effectiveness of these procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour ensures that standards of behaviour in and around the school and during lessons, and the quality of personal relationships, are good. They have a positive effect on both pupils' attainment and progress. Some parents and pupils indicate that bullying is a problem that is not always appropriately addressed within the school, but there is no evidence to suggest that there is any significant incidence of systematic bullying. Awareness of the issues, and the need to involve adults, is raised through posters displayed in the school and very good pieces of drama performed by students in assemblies, which make it clear that what may be a game to one person may be very hurtful to another. All complaints are taken seriously and, where cases are identified or reported, the school acts promptly to resolve any issues.

62. The day-to-day management of health and safety matters is satisfactory and pupils are taught good practice. For example, in science, pupils are provided with effective training in laboratory safety procedures and safe working practices, and students in the sixth form conduct their own risk assessments. The school's health and safety policy meets requirements. The headteacher has delegated responsibility for health and safety to a senior member of staff who has initiated many good practices, but who has not received training to provide the necessary underpinning knowledge of legislation. Regular safety audits are conducted and recorded, although risk assessments are not consistently undertaken. An external report, produced in July 1999, did not identify any major risks but identified a number of areas where improvements could be made. The school is using this as a basis for improving its health and safety practices. Emergency evacuations are practised each term and the fire brigade was present at a recent practice. Equipment and appliances are regularly checked and tested, with defective items taken out of use immediately. The kiln in the art department lacks an extraction system for the removal of harmful fumes and is a potential safety hazard.

63. Arrangements for first aid are good and there are adequate numbers of staff qualified in first aid. First aid supplies are readily accessible throughout the school and lists of pupils with particular medical conditions are readily available to staff. All 'treatment' is noted and the school has recently improved the level of detail recorded to assist in the identification of potential hazards.

#### **Partnership with parents and the community**

64. As at the time of the last inspection, the school has good links with parents and the community, and has very good links with the business community, which has supported the school's successful bid to secure technology college status. The school has produced a home-school agreement to support its partnership with parents and pupils, and parents express positive views about the school. In particular, they believe that the school helps their children to achieve a good standard of work, although a significant minority express concerns about the homework which pupils are expected to do. This is in part associated with the absence of a homework timetable and the inconsistency in the amounts of homework set. The findings of the inspectors support the views of the parents regarding the absence of a homework timetable.

65. Parents are provided with a range of general information about the school and its work, which is attractively presented and of high quality. Other than in Year 11 and Year 13, parents are provided with an interim report which gives grades for effort and attainment and in all years parents receive an annual report. Although a significant majority of parents are satisfied with the information that the school provides about their child's progress, the annual report does not set targets and there are some

significant variations in the ways in which some teachers provide information about the three core subjects. School reports meet statutory requirements and show the National Curriculum levels attained by pupils, but are rarely related to the standards expected at the end of Key Stage 3 or to GCSE levels. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings is good. Staff are readily accessible to parents and seek to involve them fully when there are any concerns. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately informed of their child's progress and are included in the regular reviews.

66. Parental support, which is appreciated by both staff and pupils, makes a positive contribution to the progress pupils make as well as enhancing the opportunities available to them. A small, but hard working group runs the Parent Teacher Association, and fund raising events, such as quiz evenings, are well supported. Funds raised by the Association are used to support the work of the school by subsidising educational visits and buying equipment, such as that used for weather testing, and musical instruments.

67. The school values the views of its own community and those of organisations with which it comes into contact. It conducts an annual 'ethos survey' to gain the views of pupils, staff, external agencies, local employers and the public. The results are closely examined to identify where expectations of the school are not being fully met, and to provide a basis for review and improvement. The most recent results are positive and show an improvement on previous years. Although the numbers of returns from parents were low in number, those from other groups exceeded 70 per cent.

68. The school is active in the local community, working through groups such as the school's Crime Prevention Panel to address a range of issues, including those which affect the environment and welfare. Pupils have successfully raised large sums of money to improve areas of the school, such as providing picnic benches for the playground and pictures and blinds for the canteen. They are active in fundraising to support a range of charities and have a particularly close relationship with Guide Dogs for the Blind, who provide speakers to assist the development of pupils' understanding of the needs of others. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to support the school community and, for example, GNVQ students run a tuck shop which subsidises the Year 13 Ball. A wide range of visits and residential trips are also used to enrich the curriculum and provide opportunities for pupils' personal and social development.

69. Links with local schools are very good and there are well developed strategies to support pupils transferring to the school. As part of its technology college status, the school is seeking to strengthen its curricular links with its 25 contributory primary schools and has appointed a part-time member of staff to develop those links for the benefit of pupils.

70. The school's links with the business community are also very good. Pupils undertake valuable work experience through very well developed links with local business, and this year 175 pupils in Year 10 secured work placements. In addition, staff have benefited from industrial placements in the local business community. These very good local business links, combined with support from the Lincolnshire Business Education Trust, have been particularly valuable in providing a large amount of sponsorship, in the form of cash or equipment, in support of the school's successful application for technology college status. These links are improving the facilities available to support work within the school and contributing considerably to pupils' personal development.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

71. Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. As in the last inspection, the headteacher continues to play a prominent role in determining the educational direction for the work of the school and providing the focus for its longer-term development. He has taken the lead in

successfully gaining technology college status for the school, a task that has taken a considerable amount of time over the past year or two. The headteacher is effectively supported by his deputy who plays an important role in dealing with many of the day-to-day issues relating to the management and organisation of the school. These tasks he carries out effectively, but his work, and especially his contribution to strategic thinking and planning, is constrained by the comparatively high teaching load he has. The governing body has recognised the need for an additional deputy headteacher to share some of these tasks and plans to make an appointment in the near future.

72. Members of the senior management team, which was reorganised and extended about eighteen months ago to improve strategic management, have additional whole-school responsibilities, including links with a small number of subject departments. Their role is seen as one of 'critical friend', but in practice this role lacks sufficient 'bite' in holding departments to account for their work in raising standards and improving the quality of education in, and leadership and management of, their departments. This is particularly so in relation to modern languages. On wider school issues, members of the senior management team have instituted a four-year programme of reviews. This programme is insufficiently linked to the priorities in the school development plan. The senior management team are clearly committed to improving educational standards and the quality of education in the school and to raising its profile within the local community. In these areas, they have made good progress since the last inspection. However, there is no clear, shared ethos or vision to provide a focus to their work, and their collective impact on the work of the school is not as effective as it should be. Not all the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report have been addressed with the required degree of urgency and some are raised again in this report, for example, the provision for pupils' spiritual development, preparing pupils for life in a wider and more culturally diverse community, and in monitoring more closely and systematically the outcomes of plans and policies.

73. The governing body, under the effective leadership of the chair of governors, is improving and extending its role in the governance of the school. It has recently increased the number of committees to enable it to maintain a clearer oversight of the work of the school and to allow governors to contribute more effectively to strategic planning and to monitoring aspects of the work of the school. As these committees are in the early stages of development, it is too early to make judgements on their effectiveness. However, the signs so far are positive. Governors are very supportive of the school and are committed to raising standards and its profile. The comparatively new chair of governors, who is effectively supported by the vice chair, is very clear about what needs to be done to move the school forward. With the full support and cooperation of the headteacher, he is bringing his own professional expertise to broaden attitudes, approaches and practices within the school, particularly in extending the involvement of staff in strategic thinking and planning, and in holding the school to account.

74. The governing body has approved a comprehensive range of policies and fulfils most of its legal responsibilities satisfactorily, although there are deficiencies in a few areas. The school prospectus and the annual report to parents have some important omissions, including the full reporting of the school's examination performance, and are in breach of the regulations. Although identified as weaknesses in the last inspection report, the school does not yet fully comply with the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship despite making considerable progress in this area.

75. Almost all heads of department lead and manage their departments satisfactorily and in many instances, for example in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, information technology, physical education, and in the vocational areas, do so well. In art and religious education, the quality of leadership is particularly effective; it is generally unsatisfactory in modern languages. However, subject leaders are not held sufficiently to account for improving the performance of pupils or standards within their subject areas. Staff with year group responsibilities are working satisfactorily in maintaining oversight of pupils' academic progress and in providing guidance and support. Leadership of the sixth form has some weaknesses. The sixth form lacks a clear identity and ethos, and students feel they are not well supported or encouraged to make an effective contribution to the work of the

school.

76. The provision and support for pupils with special educational needs fully meets the requirements of the national Code of Practice. Management of the special educational needs department is good and pupils with special educational needs benefit greatly as a result. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored, especially in relation to annual reviews and individual education plans. Individual needs are recognised early, and pupils are provided with appropriate support to meet their particular needs. Subject departments, who work closely with the special needs coordinator, are fully involved in drawing up individual education plans. This involvement by subject departments is a positive feature of the work of the school but there is a danger that the current system of setting individual subject targets lacks coherence for individual pupils and makes the monitoring of their progress more problematic.

77. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily throughout the school, although the school's policy and guidelines for good practice in this area are old and there is no structure for monitoring what happens on a day-to-day basis. No named teacher has responsibility for this area. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, resources and out of school activities. However, in some lessons boys take up far more of the teacher's time and attention. Girls also tend to contribute less in many lessons, adopting a passive role. Such behaviour is rarely challenged. The school, under the leadership of a senior teacher, is actively addressing the needs of the higher attaining pupils, which are currently not being met with sufficient consistency across departments.

78. Few schemes of work within subjects include planning to teach about equal opportunities and it is unusual to see displays and resources in the school offer any challenge to stereotypical gender roles. The generally low level of awareness of these issues can lead to imbalance in pupils' timetables; for example, the nature of withdrawal for additional help for special educational needs tuition for one pupil means that she regularly misses her music lesson. In a wider sense, pupils with special educational needs continue to be well integrated into the school community. There are elements of good practice within the school. In the English department, the choice of texts used shows people of different cultures and reflects an awareness of an ethnically diverse society. Since the last inspection, there have been few changes to the school's equal opportunities provision.

79. The school has implemented a number of appropriate strategies for monitoring and evaluating aspects of the school's work, including classroom observation, regular meetings between senior staff and individual heads of department, the analysis of data and pupils' performance, in addition to reviewing other aspects of the school's work. These are all worthwhile activities, but their impact is reduced because the criteria used for monitoring lack consistency, the programme of activities is insufficiently systematic, and the outcomes of the monitoring are not evaluated critically or rigorously enough to inform and consequently improve aspects of the school's performance. The monitoring role of the senior management team is unclear and, across the school, there is also some inconsistency in the way that heads of department undertake their monitoring roles, particularly in the frequency of classroom observation. This limits their ability to identify and address areas of inconsistency or weakness in their departments. Since the last inspection, the procedures for monitoring the educational outcomes of plans and policies have improved but they are still not tight enough.

80. Strategic planning and shorter-term development planning are generally satisfactory but lack the degree of detail normally found in school development plans. The current plan, which is supplemented by the school's three-year technology college development plan, identifies a range of initiatives that are appropriate to the school's stage of development. The plan includes a synopsis of achievements during the last planning year and identifies the main priorities for the next three years. These priorities include improving the quality of teaching and learning, the development of the school's provision for information and communications technology, and extending curricular collaboration with contributory primary schools and neighbouring secondary schools. The specific priorities for the current year are set out in more detail, and the plan includes success criteria and outline targets, thus



addressing to some degree the weaknesses identified in the school development plan at the time of the last inspection. However, the success criteria are insufficiently quantified or specific enough to enable the school to monitor and evaluate its progress in meeting its targets, and the monitoring and evaluation arrangements are not detailed enough. The planning process appropriately involves governors and teachers at different stages. Most departmental development planning is at least satisfactory and in some instances, for example in mathematics, art, design and technology, and geography, it is good. In English, history and music, development planning is not as effective as in other subjects.

81. The school is generally successful in meeting most of its aims, which are reflected in the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils are valued as individuals and emphasis is placed on care, concern and respect for others. Most parents believe that the school enables pupils to achieve a good standard of work and indicate that they support the school's aims and values. As the quality of teaching overall is good and the curriculum broad, the school has the potential to raise academic standards further, but this has not been realised as yet. The good ethos in the school and the positive relationships that exist between pupils and with the staff make it an effective place for pupils to learn and develop. The school has shown that it has the capacity to improve what it does, but it needs to have a clearer view of its targets and priorities if it is to sustain and improve the consistency of its performance in the future, particularly in relation to pupils' attainment.

#### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

82. There are sufficient teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. The match between teachers' initial qualifications and the subjects they teach is good, although there is some non-specialist teaching in art, design and technology, and history. This does not significantly affect standards in design and technology, but some pupils are not making as much progress as they should in history as the work is not always pitched at the correct level, and in art there is a lack of understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum. The use of non-qualified staff in drama is particularly successful and it is satisfactory in design and technology.

83. There are sufficient special needs staff and they are well qualified and experienced. They are deployed in providing much effective in-class support to pupils on the national Code of Practice register and one-to-one support for pupils with weak reading skills to become more confident and fluent readers. The support provided by technicians is good, but it is insufficient in food technology and art. There are sufficient clerical staff, together with caretaking and other non-teaching staff, to enable the school to function effectively.

84. The funding available for staff development and training is allocated and coordinated effectively to meet many of the whole school, departmental and individual training requirements as part of the school's continuing programme to raise attainment. The system of appraisal meets requirements and individual professional development needs are effectively identified through it. All staff, including non-teaching staff, have had opportunities to take part in in-service training. Progress since the last inspection includes much work on the evaluation of outcomes from training and targets for further development. There are professional development needs in the approach to assessment in a number of subjects, including English, to ensure that departments have a coherent policy and shared practices. The arrangements for the support and induction of newly qualified teachers and newly appointed staff are good, although in a number of departments additional training is needed to secure effective teamwork between those whose experience is wider, or whose training is more recent.

85. Overall, the school buildings provide satisfactory accommodation for teaching most elements of the National Curriculum. The accommodation for science and information technology is good and the library provides very good accommodation to support independent learning and study, and the development of research skills. Since the last inspection, the school roll has grown from 830 to 1030 pupils and during the last ten years considerable building work has taken place to improve the school's facilities. Additional building works are currently being undertaken to further improve accommodation

for the expanding school.

86. There are significant variations between the accommodation available to support different curricular areas and some lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms. Most classrooms provide satisfactory teaching and learning spaces but the temporary classrooms, which are used for teaching subjects such as GNVQs, provide very poor accommodation. These very cramped and poorly ventilated rooms constrain teaching styles and collaborative working, as well as restricting the opportunities for pupils to make presentations. In design and technology, the accommodation is located in five separate areas which has a detrimental impact on learning and the effective use of resources. These rooms have poor acoustics and work areas can be crowded, particularly with large class groups, such as those being taught in the graphics room. In music, the two main teaching rooms provide satisfactory accommodation, but there are occasions when classes, especially in Key Stage 4, are taught in non-specialist rooms. This affects their progress, especially, for example, where there is no piano in the room. In addition, there are insufficient practice rooms. Accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory as the available space in the studio restricts performance. Accommodation for GNVQ courses is very cramped in some lessons, thus constraining the range of teaching, learning and presentation approaches that can be used. The accommodation available for special educational needs is unsatisfactory, being too small for the numbers of pupils with special educational needs in the school and severely limits the range of teaching and learning approaches that can be used.

87. The narrow corridors provide limited opportunities for display and, although there are many attractive displays of work, art cannot make a significant impact on the school environment. The availability of suitable storage space throughout the school is variable. For example, in drama there is no storage within the department for costumes and in modern foreign languages, resources cannot be centrally located and accessible to all staff as the classrooms are scattered in various parts of the school and in the mobiles. Standards of caretaking are good and any litter is quickly removed. There are no signs of graffiti or vandalism within the school. Outside hard and grassed playing space is adequate to support the curriculum and the school has dual use arrangements with the adjoining sports centre, which provides very good facilities.

88. Learning resources are broadly satisfactory, but there are instances where shortages adversely affect the delivery of the National Curriculum. They include the unsatisfactory provision of books in design and technology throughout the school, and the lack of audio recording equipment in music. Book provision is generally satisfactory. The library is well stocked, and is particularly good in art, but there are shortages of recreational and puzzle books in mathematics. The ratio of pupils to computers is currently higher than average, although additional computers are being installed. The school has several computer suites, all well equipped with multi-media machines and appropriate software. In subject departments, apart from an insufficiency in the computer suites and in Key Stage 3 drama, book provision is adequate, and good in art and in modern languages in the sixth form.

89. The provision of materials is generally satisfactory, and is good in art. The history department provides good 'in-house' materials in Key Stage 3. Materials and equipment in religious education and physical education are good throughout the school. Art and information technology are also well equipped throughout, as is science in Key Stages 3 and 4. There is a good stock of musical instruments, including keyboards. However, the provision of equipment in history is unsatisfactory at all stages and the history department lacks a computer, for instance. Equipment in drama is also unsatisfactory, and productions are only possible through borrowing from other institutions. GNVQ resources are generally satisfactory. In all other areas, equipment is adequate. Displays throughout the school are satisfactory but lack the imagination needed to make them a good learning resource. All the issues identified in the last inspection report, none of which were key issues, have been addressed, especially access to information technology equipment.

### **The efficiency of the school**

90. The school manages its resources well and expenditure is based on good financial planning, supported by very good financial control. The rapid increase in the number of pupils on roll has resulted in the school carrying, with the full knowledge of the local education authority, a deficit budget. This situation has arisen because of the need to employ additional staff and provide resources to support these additional pupils. Strong representations from the headteacher, supported by the chair and vice-chair of governors, secured some advance funding from the local education authority to cope with the financial consequence of increased numbers of pupils. The local education authority has been closely involved in drawing up the financial plan and has fully supported a five year 'recovery' programme, which will eliminate the current deficit. The application for technology college status and the increasing school roll have focused the school's financial planning, which has been extended to cover a period to March 2005. Financial planning is closely linked to the school's development plan, encompassing the proposals in the technology college application, projections of pupil numbers and budget allocation. At present, senior managers and coordinators are insufficiently involved in contributing to this planning, but the headteacher and governing body are taking steps to develop their strategic role by providing greater access to financial information and other data.

91. The school benefits from the experience of the governors and, in particular, that of the chair and vice-chair. They are increasingly developing a strategic overview in the process of financial planning and setting measurable targets, which are closely monitored through the monthly meetings of the finance committee. The governing body has taken a strategic view of the funding available to the school and has closely linked it to the school's priorities. It is also taking an increasing role in the regular review and updating of the development plan with the objective of ensuring that educational developments are supported through the financial planning process, and that there are improved mechanisms for measuring the achievement of success criteria and value for money. Since the previous inspection, the educational outcomes of plans and policies have been monitored more closely and, besides self-evaluation and monitoring, external consultants have been used to monitor the school's effectiveness. However, the school is not using the data it obtains sufficiently rigorously to set targets for improvement.

92. Financial monitoring within the school and by the governing body is good. The budget is reconciled against the financial statement on a monthly basis and the headteacher and the chair of the finance committee monitor financial reports regularly. These are considered further at the finance committee meetings. Expenditure is closely controlled. A recent audit, conducted by the local education authority, did not identify any significant weaknesses. The school has already begun to review and implement measures to improve procedures.

93. The good support provided by the office and reception staff is unobtrusive and staff are very flexible, which significantly benefits the efficient organisation of the school's administrative functions. Financial administration is good and accurate financial management information and statements are readily accessible.

94. Teachers and support staff are deployed effectively. The school has deliberately increased administrative support to enable teaching staff to have a greater focus on teaching priorities, although they are still required to complete some basic clerical tasks such as totalling registers. The employment of some unqualified staff, in areas such as drama and design and technology, is not detrimental to pupils' progress and provides a wider base of practical experience to support learning effectively in these areas. Funds to support in-service training are used appropriately. Training is evaluated to ensure that its benefits are focused upon whole-school improvement and the professional development of staff. Recent initiatives, involving all staff, have focused upon 'problem solving' and empowering staff to develop a management system that can respond to the challenges of technology college status and an enlarged school. However, the role of subject leaders in contributing to whole school aspects, such as finance, is not yet adequately developed to enable them to monitor their areas of responsibility fully. Provision and support for pupils with special educational needs are good and the use of funds for these pupils, to meet the requirements of their statements, is effective.

95. Cramped accommodation for the teaching of some classes, and the dispersed storage of resources in some curricular areas inhibits the teaching, but many of these issues are being addressed through the current building programme. This will provide the opportunity to address efficiency issues which arise as a consequence of the current accommodation provision and improve the teaching areas in some parts of the school. Resources for learning are used effectively to support pupils' learning.

96. The school gives clear educational direction and provides good teaching. It promotes good personal development in its students, good attitudes and behaviour. Although attainment overall is mostly satisfactory, the higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. Improvement since the last inspection has been broadly satisfactory. The school's average unit cost per pupil is generally in line with that of other schools nationally. Taking account of the contextual factors, the quality of education provided, the outcomes and the levels of expenditure, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

## PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

### ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

#### English

97. In the Key Stage 3 national tests in English in 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 or above was above the national average, whereas the proportion of those reaching Level 6 or above was broadly in line with the national average. These results are similar to those for 1998 at Level 5 or above but are an improvement at Level 6 or above. Over the past four years, pupils' performance in English, based on the average of all the levels, has improved considerably, particularly that of the boys, and in 1999 was in line with the average. The girls' performance was far better than that of the boys in the 1999 tests as in previous years, although the boys' performance was close to the national average for boys nationally.

98. In the GCSE examinations in English language in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was below the national average, showing a decline in the school's performance from 1998 when the results were above average. In English literature, the results in 1999 were above the national average, continuing the pattern over the past few years. As is generally the case, the performance of the girls was better than that of the boys in both English language and literature. Contributory factors to the particularly successful performance of pupils in the 1998 GCSE examinations include the drive to improve the performance of boys and the allocation of an extra English period to that particular cohort at Key Stage 4. In the A-level examination in 1999, the results were slightly lower than the national figure for the proportion of students gaining grades A-E. No student gained the higher grades of A or B. The numbers choosing to study English literature in the sixth form are steadily rising but the comparatively small numbers makes it difficult to make meaningful comparisons with the national figures.

99. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectation, slightly below the standard indicated by the test results in 1999. Pupils of all abilities speak and listen very well. Girls listen more attentively but boys are often more fluent and confident when speaking in class. Most pupils read well and their writing is mainly average in standard. Mostly girls read and write more accurately than boys. Higher attaining pupils have a good comprehension of texts and show ability for intelligent deduction. When they read aloud, they do so with expression and understanding. Some write to a high standard and are able to empathise with people living in dire circumstances such as Captain Scott and the members of his expedition. They compare and contrast his diary of real events with the fictional account of the experiences of characters in J.V.Marshall's *Walkabout*. They understand how stories are constructed and write to a standard at or above the national expectation. Pupils write for many different purposes and audiences and they produce diaries, letters, factual accounts, essays, stories, poems, reasoning pieces and descriptions. Some pupils reach a high standard of presentation through using information technology. Many pupils are able to make very effective use of computers when word-processing. They understand the relevant technical terms and write quite efficiently at the keyboard, performing at a level in line with the national expectation.

100. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in English language is broadly in line with the national expectation, slightly better than the GCSE results in 1999 would indicate. In English literature, their attainment is broadly in line with the national expectation, reflecting the GCSE results in 1999. Higher attaining pupils speak fluently and effectively, voicing their thoughts with ease. They write accurately and well, reaching a standard comfortably above the standard expected nationally. Most think for themselves, following their own line of reasoning concerning the content of texts. They make very good notes quite fast and recognise shades of meaning in what they are reading. Some produce very good accounts, literate and vivid, of their work experience. Both boys and girls write quite powerful imaginative accounts of teenage dilemmas in the modern world. A few present particularly

good reviews of poems such as W. H. Auden's *Stop the Clocks, Cut off the Telephone* or Grace Nichols' *Man I love*, in which they show a mature understanding of grief and anguish. Girls perform better than boys in terms of accuracy, presentation and thoroughness. Average attaining pupils speak and listen well. Many have a good knowledge of current social issues such as homelessness. Often the boys tend to write interestingly but too briefly. Lower attaining pupils have a reasonably good understanding of the importance of paragraphing, spelling and grammar but most present their work in a very untidy fashion with poor spelling, lay-out, no paragraphing, omitted words and confusion of ideas. Very occasionally the quality of their writing is unexpectedly good, as was exemplified in a piece about the fear of dying and in a pastiche tabloid account of the death of Lennie in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.

101. By the end of the sixth form, students' attainment is in line with course requirements. The higher attaining students write with enthusiasm and give good expression to complex thoughts. They compose extended pieces of literary evaluation on abstract topics such as "The struggles to find self-worth in *Jude the Obscure*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Maurice* and the consequences to individuality". Although there are errors of punctuation, the quality of thinking and understanding shown is very good and sometimes excellent. Quotations to support the arguments are well chosen and apt. In discussion, they speak well and listen intently. They mostly read with good critical sensitivity, sometimes making interesting and original points about motivation. Their writing is literate and fluent.

102. Pupils generally make good progress throughout Key Stage 3, with that of the boys improving at a faster rate, owing to the drive to improve their performance by the provision of extra help and a change in the way classes are grouped. Just over a half of pupils in Year 7 have a reading age which matches or is above their chronological age. All pupils are helped to identify personal targets for improvement and are helped to attain these goals. As they move through the key stage, most pupils become more aware of sentence structure. Their increased general knowledge helps to raise the standard of their thinking in essays and other exercises. Homework is mostly completed and a significant number of pupils take pride in presenting careful work, which is imaginative and beautifully illustrated. By means of their competence in writing, reading and understanding, higher attaining pupils make speedy progress. In the unit of work entitled 'School under Siege', pupils made good contribution to discussion, showing developing powers to analyse and to devise their own lines of thought. In Year 8, pupils consolidate their knowledge of such basics as parts of speech and figures of speech. They are also introduced to Chaucer for the first time and learn about the history of language and how it evolves.

Pupils in Year 9 persist well in their tasks and by means of drafting produce some accurate and well-presented writing. Many have developed a good appreciation of good writing. In technical subjects across the curriculum, pupils are learning the terms and specialised vocabulary they need in order to express their thoughts in those areas. Pupils of average attainment make good progress, too, but at a slower pace. They tend to answer questions rather than to think of ones to ask. Some pupils, whose reading age is lower than average, are withdrawn for special help to improve their standard of literacy. Pupils with special educational needs are helped in a variety of ways to meet their targets and are prepared for the appropriate examination papers to suit their needs.

103. During Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress in acquiring and consolidating their knowledge, skills and understanding, although spelling remains unreliable in many cases at Key Stage 4. Pupils tackle a wide range of interesting tasks to help deepen their awareness of what lies below the surface of a text. Pupils in Year 11 make good progress in understanding the scope of questions on unseen texts. They practise how to tackle a difficult passage with an unfamiliar background and how to time an answer. Extended work is set for higher attaining pupils on an individual basis.

104. In the sixth form, students' ability to respond to a variety of texts is growing. Essays become longer, more carefully reasoned and mature in expression. Careful work on writers such as Toni Morrison is well researched. Year 12 are making a very good start on studying *Hamlet*, improving their understanding of the complexities of Act I and of the issues exposed in the play. Their response to the language of Shakespeare is developing. Students in Year 13 are improving their skills in evaluating the

quality of writing and in appreciating how subtly effective it is. Some of these students read widely to research background knowledge for their course. The main strengths in pupils' work are their motivation, their relationship with teachers, standards of speaking and listening, reading skills and their legible handwriting. Their main weaknesses are poor spelling, poor presentation and carelessness about accuracy and detail.

105. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They have a constructive approach to their work and most concentrate and persist in the face of difficulties when their interest is aroused. They use the library and undertake personal research when preparing projects. Pupils' motivation and their ability to concentrate improves as they move through the school. Most behave well in class and are courteous to others. They treat books and equipment with care and respect the displays of work on walls. Their respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others grows in proportion to the age of the pupils. Texts are chosen from a wide range of backgrounds so that, through the study of literature, pupils are able to have vicarious experience of life in cultures and circumstances other than their own. The English department provides pupils with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning by involving them in setting their personal targets for improvement.

106. The quality of teaching overall is mostly good, occasionally very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are secure. Expectations are nearly always appropriately pitched to provide challenge for all. Lessons are well-planned and organised to support progress across all the key skills, and, in most cases, are effectively delivered in a friendly and encouraging atmosphere. Nearly all teachers have very good relationships with their classes. Management of pupils and standards of discipline are good. Handouts are always of good standard and well devised to promote interest. Explanations and instructions are clear and the skilled use of questioning promotes thought. Strategies are usually varied to maintain interest and to provide a wide range of learning experiences for the classes. Time and resources are well deployed. Most teachers are familiar with the special needs of those who have particular requirements. Homework is set and well marked with helpful comment and advice, but its effectiveness is constrained by the lack of a homework timetable. Most teaching is informed by assessment. Occasionally, lessons are less successful and lack pace when the teacher talks continuously and at too great length, receiving little contribution from the pupils.

107. The department is well and effectively led, although monitoring the work of the department is only in its early stages. All the teachers are committed to improving the standards attained by their pupils but the distance between classrooms inhibits teamwork and so prevents the English staff from working at maximum efficiency. The curriculum is broad and balanced, but assessment is insufficiently used to inform teaching and planning, especially at Key Stage 3, when all pupils follow a common course. Since the last inspection the department has, with some success, laid emphasis on improving the performance of boys. Information technology has been partially integrated into the curriculum, in the form of one lesson per week for Year 9 pupils in the computer suite. Target setting has been introduced to promote progress and to provide opportunity for pupils to take responsibility. A departmental development plan has been devised and partially followed. An English handbook has also been compiled. These two documents are in their initial stage of use.

## **Mathematics**

108. Raising standards in mathematics was a key issue in the last inspection report, and this has been done well. The results of the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were in line with the national average for the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above, and for the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 or above. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. Since the last inspection, the results have improved considerably. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, all pupils gained grades A\*-G, and the proportion of pupils attaining grade A\*-C was in line with the national average, with boys and girls performing equally well. Again, since the last inspection, the results have improved considerably. There has also been a steady increase in the results at A-level,

particularly in grades A to D. In 1999, the proportion of students attaining grades A-E was in line with the national average, although the proportion achieving the higher grades of A and B was below the national figure.

109. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the standard expected nationally and reflects the test results in 1999. The higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are attaining well above average standards. All pupils are working out areas of parallelograms correctly, use Logo without repeat to draw polygons on the computer, and understand, without being able to name them as such, arithmetic progressions. Average attaining pupils are able to find the 'nth' term of these. They confidently use repeat in Logo, and use and multiply out brackets in simple algebraic expressions. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is also in line with the national expectation and is similar to the performance in the GCSE examinations in 1999. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, solve simple linear algebraic equations, understand reflection and rotation transformations, and use tally charts to draw up frequency tables. Average attaining pupils solve simultaneous equations, understand loci, and carry out quite complicated investigations into number patterns created by matchsticks or paving stones around ponds. In the sixth form, students' attainment is in line with course expectations, again reflecting the results in the A-level examinations in 1999. In the A-level classes, there are fewer very high or very low attaining students than is usually found in similar schools.

110. Pupils make mostly good progress throughout the school, mainly because of generally good teaching and curricular organisation. The good progress of pupils with special educational needs, all of whom follow the National Curriculum, is reflected in the GCSE results in 1999, with all achieving a GCSE grade. Pupils' mathematical skills are slightly below average on entry to the school in Year 7. Their good progress during Key Stage 3 takes pupils from this position to attaining average standards by the end of Year 9. Since the last inspection, the department has reorganised teaching methods in Key Stage 3 to include more teacher exposition and direct questioning of pupils, and this has had a positive effect on their progress. A key issue in the last inspection report was to enable higher attaining pupils to achieve their full potential. This has occurred in mathematics. The highest attaining pupils in Year 9 accurately interpret cumulative frequency graphs to conclude what type of distribution originally produced them - work which is two years ahead of what is expected nationally, and indicates progress of one National Curriculum level for each year in the school, which is about double the expected progress. These pupils solve quadratic equations, plot parabolas and check answers on graphics calculators, and understand trigonometry in the first quadrant.

111. Pupils also make good progress in Key Stage 4. The attainment of the current Year 11 pupils when in Year 9 was below average but is now in line with the national average. Departmental analysis shows that 'value added' in Years 10 and 11 is good and rising. Higher attaining pupils sit their GCSE examinations at intermediate level at the end of Year 10, so one-eighth of the present Year 11 have already achieved a grade B at GCSE. They manipulate and simplify surds, understand negative and fractional indices, draw accurate histograms, and employ the sine rule. A-level students make good progress, both in the more formally taught part of the course in pure mathematics and statistics, and in mathematical modelling of interesting situations, for example, a critical path analysis of making Spaghetti Bolognese, or a comparison of word length in broadsheet and tabloid newspapers.

112. There is no measurable difference in pupils' progress in the different aspects of mathematics. Differences in the progress of boys and girls are quite marked in some years, but it swings between the two, with girls doing better in some years and boys in others. Their progress in the acquisition of numeracy is satisfactory, working towards the department's good definition of what constitutes a numerate citizen. This progress takes place mainly in mathematics lessons themselves, although there is satisfactory development in other subjects. One weakness is that numeracy, unlike literacy, is not included in individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs to be used by teachers of other subjects.



113. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good in general, although they sometimes choose to work alone when cooperation with a partner would yield greater progress. Only in one lesson, with a set of lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 3, were attitudes unsatisfactory, with a lack of concentration and attention, largely because the class was composed of pupils with a variety of difficulties, and lacked additional adult support. In general, pupils behave well, especially in Key Stage 3. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves are good. Pupils respond very well to interesting and challenging work, for instance in a practical exercise with Year 7 to pack a paper cube with a three-dimensional 'jigsaw' puzzle with different pieces made from nets of cuboids and L-shapes. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by raising their confidence in mental mathematics and in investigative and problem solving skills. A-level students work very hard and volunteer answers readily in class, even if they are not sure that their answer is right.

114. The quality of teaching is mostly good at both key stages and in the sixth form, and is rarely less than satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Methods and organisational strategies are satisfactory, although sometimes too little thought is given to matching work closely to the needs of the range of attainment within setted groups, and some teachers do not take enough risks to make lessons more interesting. This sometimes leads, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, to a lack of imagination in the use of time and resources, although these were never less than satisfactory in the lessons seen. The marking of work is conscientious, but comments are not used as a record of what each individual can do, and marking is not used to set individual short-term targets. All other aspects of teaching are good. In one lesson, on isometric drawing of cuboids, the pace of learning was not quick enough, as the teacher made insufficient demands on the class and the lesson meandered rather than being sharply focused.

115. Leadership of the department is good, and has been effective in raising standards. The mathematics department has an excellent handbook to work from, covering all aspects of the department's provision. The schemes of work for Key Stages 3 and 4 are very good, with each aspect of the National Curriculum covered in steps tied to the levels of each attainment target, and the whole scheme aimed at three different attainment levels to make good use of the setting arrangements. The scheme makes planning straightforward, both for the medium term and for lessons. Assessment is very good, and is used to move pupils from set to set at the end of each year. All test results are analysed meticulously, and the analysis is used very well to set targets for teaching groups, for individual pupils and students, and for the department. Only one set is entered for the higher level GCSE examination at present, and the department has been slow in extending this number, although there are plans to move towards this next year. Much of the accommodation for mathematics is dispersed. While this does not affect the delivery of the National Curriculum, it leads to inefficient use of time, as teachers have to move resources around the school between lessons.

## **Science**

116. The results of the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the national averages at Level 5 or above and also at Level 6 or above. Boys and girls performed equally well in the tests. The results at Level 5 or above in recent years have shown a steady improvement and were above the national average in 1998, but showed a slight drop in 1999. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the results for grades A\*-C were in line with the national average, but lower than the results in 1998 when they were above the national average. Almost every pupil in Year 11 was entered for the double award science in 1999 and all gained a grade A\*-F. In the A-Level examinations in 1999, the number of students entered for the three separate sciences was small and makes national comparisons unrealistic. However, all the students entered for biology and chemistry obtained a grade A-E and half did so in physics. In biology and chemistry, four students gained the higher grades of A or B. Current A-level groups remain small except in Y12 physics where there has been a sharp increase in numbers. Since the

last inspection, the results at Key Stage 3 have shown a steady improvement up until 1999 and the results at GCSE have risen considerably. The results at A-Level have been consistently good over the years in biology and chemistry but have not so far reached the national average in physics.

117. From the work seen during the inspection, pupils are attaining standards in line with the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 3. The vast majority of pupils are confident and accurate in the use of scientific vocabulary. The department places a suitable emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy skills through the use of glossaries of terms for each unit of work. Numeracy skills are satisfactory, but the presentation of data in graphical forms occasionally lacks care and accuracy. The use of information and communication technology has increased considerably since the last inspection with the influx of a growing bank of computers available to the department. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs reach standards in line with and sometimes higher than those which might be expected of them. In the sixth form, the majority of students attain standards in line with course expectations in biology and chemistry and some attain higher standards than this, but struggle to reach the expected standard in physics. Sixth form students support their learning with sound personal study skills in all subject areas.

118. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. By the end of the key stage, they have knowledge of electricity and various electrical circuits. They have an understanding of the reactivity series of metals, based on observing the action of some metals with water. They understand the process of photosynthesis in plants and know the benefits of a balanced diet and healthy life style to humans. They carry out simple scientific investigations and draw valid conclusions from the results. Pupils use computer skills appropriately in their practical work. Year 9 pupils use spreadsheets to record their results on stretching springs and subsequently produce a computer-generated extension/load graph. They have good skills in searching for information using reference books and CD ROMs, and they present their material in interesting and imaginative posters, leaflets and booklets on such varied topics as famous scientists, the elements and the solar system.

119. During Key Stage 4, pupils make satisfactory progress. By the end of the key stage, they have growing confidence in applying their knowledge in new situations. Pupils in Year 11 use their knowledge of the kinetic model of matter to speculate on the relative strengths of the attractive forces between molecules in substances such as petrol, lubricating oil and wax. Their understanding of electricity develops through comparing measurements of voltage and current in sections of various circuits. They calculate resistance and use the power ratings of electrical appliances to select an appropriate fuse. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of genetics and of genetically inherited illnesses such as cystic fibrosis. Pupils undertake scientific investigations efficiently in all three sciences. A small minority of boys do not maintain adequate commitment to their work and fail to achieve a mark for coursework that reflects their potential. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Key Stage 4. They follow a carefully selected course that enables them to be entered for the full double award GCSE examinations at Foundation Level. Teachers have high but realistic expectations of them and give them good support.

120. The response of pupils and students to their science lessons is good. They arrive at lessons prepared to work, and are polite, courteous and attentive listeners. They express themselves well, confidently putting across facts or personal views. They show an awareness of and sensitivity to the views of others when discussing controversial issues such as animal welfare, genetic engineering and the environment. Pupils settle quickly to the tasks that are set and generally maintain concentration well. On the odd occasion when the pace of the lesson flags, a small number of lower attaining boys cause minor disruption. Pupils work well together in group activities, sharing the work and exchanging views. Personal study skills develop well, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

121. The quality of teaching overall is never less than satisfactory and is occasionally good and

sometimes very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, are confident in their delivery of information and ideas and in their responses to pupils' questions. They structure questions effectively and direct them well to assess progress in lessons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils of all abilities and set appropriate tasks. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives, and proceed at good pace to sustain pupils' interest. Time is generally well used, although in some lessons insufficient time is allowed at the end of the lesson to review progress. Since the last inspection, teachers' over-reliance on worksheets has been replaced by a good balance of teaching methods. The routine use of computers in lessons is growing steadily to good effect. Homework is regularly set and accurately marked but spelling mistakes of key words are not consistently picked up. Supportive comments are given but do not always indicate how pupils can improve their work.

122. Leadership of the department is good and there is a clear commitment to high standards. The departmental development plan is well focused and realistic in its objectives. Monitoring of the curriculum is good and regular reviews undertaken of each year's programme of work. The monitoring of teaching is still at an early stage of development. The technicians contribute significantly to the smooth running of the teaching programmes.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Art**

123. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was below the national average. Over the period 1997-1999, the GCSE results have been below the national average, although they were closer to the average in 1998. The proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\*-G has been above the national average for all three years. Girls perform better than boys at the higher grades but the boys' results have improved and in 1998 were above average when compared with the figures for boys nationally. In 1999, pupils performed better in this subject than they did in most other subjects. In the A-level examinations in 1999, the small number of pupils entered for the examination makes comparisons with the national figures unrealistic, but all gained grades A-E although none gained the higher grades of A or B. This reflects the pattern in the results over the past three years.

124. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils attain the standard expected nationally, slightly better than the teachers' assessments at the end of the key stage in 1999 would indicate. Higher attainment at this key stage is inhibited by the limited provision of specialist teachers and accommodation. Pupils in Year 9 generally observe accurately, and draw and paint confidently using a range of materials. The quality of written work, on research sheets, is at least average and often better than this in terms of presentation, spelling and content. Higher attaining pupils are able to make connections between learning in other subject areas and relate this to their project on perspective. Boys are more confident than girls in answering questions, as was seen in a lesson based on Renaissance art, and appear more conversant with artists' portrayals of Christian figures, such as that of the Virgin Mary.

125. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in observational drawing in lessons is above the standard expected. The higher attaining pupils in Year 11 call on previous experiences of drawing ellipses to inform their present studies. Average and lower attaining pupils observe and record what they see, but do not always plan ahead or consider the whole composition. Both higher and some average attaining pupils are self critical, and this reflection on practice leads to improvements in the quality of the work they produce. There are some strengths in their colour prints based on natural forms.

126. By the end of the sixth form, students' attainment is above course expectations in critical

studies, and in line with, and sometimes above, course expectations in drawing and painting. Students in Year 13 have benefited from a recent visit to London galleries. They are articulate in describing their chosen area of study and able to put forward ideas in a clear and logical manner. Strengths are evident in their paintings of still life and portraiture, but the scale of painting undertaken is small when compared with best practice.

127. When taught by specialist teachers in Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress, but their progress is more variable when taught by non-specialist teachers. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Ancillary helpers are well informed and able to support pupils at crucial points in the lesson. Good progress is evident in the Year 7 mask project, with pupils having responsibility for allocating their time within the framework offered. In Year 8, pupils make satisfactory progress in their pastel studies of fruit, but their understanding of the links with Cézanne's work is insecure. Sketchbooks are not used in this key stage and this is a missed opportunity for developing pupils' thinking skills.

128. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 4 is good overall. Pupils are aware of the examination requirements, and understand the importance of research as part of this process. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10 have the opportunity to undertake extension activities, for example, in their Cubist sculptures. The lack of sketchbooks in this key stage is also a missed opportunity for developing thought processes and extending opportunities for independent learning, particularly for potentially higher attaining pupils.

129. Students in the sixth form make good progress through regular individual tutorials, where they gain a clear idea of how to make further improvements in their work. In Year 12, students are currently extending their understanding of materials as well as extending their skills. Timetable constraints mean that sixth formers rarely get the opportunity to work together and share ideas.

130. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are generally good in both key stages, and very good in the sixth form. The majority of pupils approach their work positively, which aids their progress and the standards they attain. A few boys in Year 9, who do not think it necessary to achieve well, can disrupt other pupils' learning as well as their own.

131. The quality of teaching is mostly good and occasionally very good, and is rarely less than satisfactory. The best teaching arises from secure subject knowledge and understanding and good planning. The teaching of information technology within art is good. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the very good teamwork which exists between teachers and learning support assistants. Classroom assessment is a strong feature of specialist teachers' practice. These teachers are very generous of their time with art club activities. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, there is a mismatch between the teacher's knowledge and understanding and the requirements of the National Curriculum.

132. The department is very well managed, with very clear policies and guidance to ensure that statutory requirements are met. Displays in the art areas are very good but art displays have little impact throughout the rest of the school. The specialist accommodation is good, although insufficient to serve all classes, including the sixth form. This is adversely affecting standards. The kiln is located in a paper store but has no extraction system for the removal of harmful fumes, a health and safety issue. The lack of technical help adds undue strain to teachers by using time for the preparation of resources that could be used more effectively for monitoring and assessment activities. Satisfactory progress has been made in addressing most issues raised in the last inspection report, although the problem of non-specialist teaching and accommodation at Key Stage 3 remains.

## **Design and technology**

133. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the results overall were slightly above the national average for grades A\*-C. There has been a steady improvement in the overall results at grades A\*-C in the last three years, and those for 1999 are better than those for 1998. There is considerable variation in performance between the subject aspects in the GCSE examinations. In 1999, the results were above average in resistant materials and in graphics, but were below average in food technology and textiles, and similar to the results in 1998. The below average results in food technology and textiles are linked to inadequate curriculum development to meet current National Curriculum requirements. In the new GNVQ Intermediate course in manufacturing, pupils are completing unit awards in line with assessment requirements.

134. The A-level results in 1999 were above the national average, with all students gaining grades A-E and nearly half gaining the higher grades of A and B. In the A-level examinations in the previous two years, every student obtained grade A-E. However, numbers entered for these examinations are too small to make national comparisons meaningful. Students completing the NVQ Engineering Level 2 units are on target to achieve the competency requirements.

135. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment overall is at the standard expected nationally, slightly lower than the teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 would indicate. From the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment is weaker in food technology than in the other aspects of the subject, indicating a lack of knowledge and understanding about materials and their properties. Pupils have a good range of competencies in research and designing to make products using a wide range of materials and construction processes. Pupils are familiar with computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. Standards of graphical skill are good. Pupils communicate their ideas effectively for their designs using carefully labelled diagrams and modelling - as when pupils in Year 9 develop and record their ideas for a mechanism to help a disabled person. The standard of presentation of written work is above average. The department is rigorous about key words and pupils spell technical terms correctly. Numeracy skills are good. Overall standards by the end of Key Stage 3 have risen as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection in 1995.

136. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is just above average overall and reflects the results of the GCSE examinations in 1999 and 1998. Current work with resistant materials and graphics is average, and some is better. Higher attaining pupils present their work carefully, with most pupils keeping detailed records of work for extended assignments, supporting later revision. Pupils are achieving higher standards in textiles than the 1999 GCSE results would suggest, because of the increased rigour in their work. In food technology, skills of research and practical investigation are closer to the expected standard and better than at Key Stage 3. Pupils present data in the form of charts and graphs using computer graphics. A small but significant number of higher attaining pupils achieve less than might be expected because they are not challenged sufficiently by the choice of project tasks. In the sixth form, students' attainment in the A-level design and technology course is at least in line with course requirements and in the NVQ Engineering Level 2 programme is in line with expectations.

137. Many pupils make good progress in all years and higher-attaining pupils learn to solve more challenging design tasks successfully as they move through the school. This is illustrated by rising standards in the Key Stage 3 tests, and at GCSE in above average results in resistant materials and graphics. Progress, as indicated by GCSE results for the past three years, has been insufficient in food technology and textiles, but the satisfactory and often good progress seen in lessons at Key Stage 3 and 4 are signs of improvement. Students' skills in independent study develop noticeably in the sixth form and progress as indicated by the A-level results in recent years has been consistently well above average.

138. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good throughout the school. Pupils are well behaved, attentive

and quickly settle to work. The work generally motivates pupils and sustains their interest. They respond well to teachers' questions and discuss ideas thoughtfully. They use tools confidently and cooperate well in groups sharing workspaces sensibly. Occasionally, where the work is too simple, as for example in drawing a sandwich filling, pupils rapidly lose interest and, in crowded working conditions, struggle to concentrate to plan and produce written work.

139. Most of the teaching is good, and sometimes very good, throughout the school and this contributes significantly to pupils' above average attainment. Teaching is rarely less than satisfactory. Teachers have a thorough understanding of their specialist subjects. The majority of lessons are well planned, with clear targets and taught at a brisk pace to make efficient use of lesson time. The range of teaching styles has improved since the last inspection to develop pupils' skills of independent learning. A little teaching is unsatisfactory. Weaknesses include occasional uncertainty about the nature of food technology and work that is not always pitched at the right level to extend the older and the higher attaining pupils. Resources are used effectively in most lessons and beneficial links with the local community and industry enhance both teaching and learning. Assessment is well used to ensure progression in pupils' learning. The non-specialist teaching in textiles is not adversely affecting standards.

140. Management of the subject is good. The department has responded well to the last inspection, for example, by improved teaching schemes at Key Stage 3 and the appointment of a coordinator to assess and review pupils' progress. New vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form offer pupils more choice in resistant materials although there are no vocational courses for food and textiles. New staffing appointments are contributing effectively to the improvements. Industrial and community links are very good. Since the last inspection the growing number of pupils on roll has increased the pressure on accommodation. Groups of 26, usually in spaces designed for 20 pupils, are not uncommon at Key Stage 3 and cramped working conditions restrict pupils' progress. A shortage of books restricts the range and quality of researching that pupils undertake. Teaching rooms are located some distance apart and this reduces collaboration and effective sharing of resources. Technical support is good in resistant materials, but there is none in food technology. A deficiency of technical help was identified in the last inspection and remains to be remedied.

## **Geography**

141. In 1999, the GCSE results at grades A\*-C were below the national average, slightly lower than the figures for 1998 when they were also below average. The overall trend in the results over the past three years is one of slight improvement, but the results in the subject remain lower than for many other subjects in the school. Over the past two years, the number of pupils choosing to study geography in Key Stage 4 has increased, resulting in a larger proportion of higher attaining pupils taking the subject. Girls have performed better than the boys for at least the last two years. At A-level in 1999, all students entered for the examination gained grades A-E. Whilst the results are improving for the proportion of students gaining pass grades, up until this year few gained the higher grades of A and B. In 1999, the proportion gaining these higher grades was broadly similar to the picture found nationally. However, the small number of students entered for the A-level examinations make comparisons with the national figures not very meaningful.

142. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate that pupils' attainment was broadly in line with the national average, showing some improvement over the figures for 1998 when they were below the national average. From the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 are slightly below the standard expected nationally, and below the standard indicated by the teachers' assessments in 1999, although a significant minority are reaching the expected levels in terms of their geographical skills, knowledge and understanding. Most pupils have a sense of scale and direction, understand the significance of compass points on maps and know why scale is important. Using appropriate technical language, they describe journeys by reference to reading maps. Through studying natural phenomena such as hurricanes and earthquakes, they are able to

explain or describe cause and effect, and display them accurately in several different forms using information and communication technology. Higher attaining pupils link life expectancy to the stage of economic development of countries throughout the world. Pupils arrive at an awareness of people in other parts of the world in a non-judgmental way. By the end of the key stage, most pupils are competent in learning and, to some extent, retaining facts learned in previous lessons. They are improving their skills of interpreting facts, but are not yet, overall, able to do so without detailed and skilful guidance by the class teachers.

143. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is also below the national expectation, although there is an overall improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels for pupils of this age. Standards are better than the GCSE results in 1999 would imply, confirming the trend for improvement, especially with the increased numbers now in Years 10 and 11. This improvement in performance is a result of regular and frequent testing, and encouraging pupils to reflect on their success in Key Stage 3 and its continuity in Key Stage 4, as well as the teachers' enthusiastic presentation in lessons. The girls are producing a better standard of work than the boys. Their meticulous attention to detail, constant application to learning and standards of presentation, seen in class and in the scrutiny of work, is at a higher level than that of the boys. Thus, they are better equipped to answer a wider range of questions presented in examinations. Pupils have a good knowledge of physical processes, such as the formation of landscape by rivers and the evolution of coastlines. They are confident in the use of sources such as atlases. Most know and understand terms such as choropleth and isobar as represented on maps. Their knowledge of the hydrological cycle helps them in understanding both weather and erosion. Pupils of higher prior attainment confidently interpret facts and, for example, make good conjectures relating to the progress of coastal erosion, based on previous learning. This skill is increasing among the pupils in Year 10 more than in Year 11. The rigour of learning and retention is improving in the early part of the key stage, but is not seen to the same extent in Year 11 as yet.

144. In the sixth form, students' attainment from their course work and in lessons is broadly in line with course expectations. In one Year 12 lesson, a reporting back by higher attaining students demonstrated a firm grasp of research work based on people who live in a peripheral area, for example, Tory Island. It showed confidence in presentation and a wide vision of varied alternative scenarios for future economic development.

145. Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3. Most have acquired basic skills of map work, including knowledge of symbols used on maps, scales used for measuring and locating by using co-ordinates. The majority of pupils have learned the technical terms to describe weather accurately, such as the correct names for clouds, and the different origins of precipitation. They know that precipitation includes rain, sleet, snow, drizzle and fog, and understand that the reason for rain falling is related to the changes in temperature in rising air. Most are able to describe factors that help to indicate the economic development of countries throughout the world. Higher attaining pupils understand the relevance of the levels of literacy, the number of doctors per head of population and average life expectancy in these definitions. They show their levels of understanding more clearly in the longer pieces of individual work. In these pieces, most pupils demonstrate their competence in information and communication technology, including word processing, desktop publishing and importing artwork. From a simple ability to describe the world around them at the beginning of the key stage, most pupils progress to being aware of a greater complexity of the physical and human aspects of the wider world. For example, they go from a knowledge of rain, sun and wind to the interrelationships of the hydrological cycle, and from describing how a farm works, to understanding why the wealthy nations of the 'North' have different life styles and expectancy from the less developed nations of the 'South' of the world. Recent developments in teaching and learning styles ensure that work has a greater rigour. This has not yet had time to work through to the end of the key stage.

146. During Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. A review of their class work shows that many are making the necessary progress to achieve the standards expected to ensure grades A\*-C at GCSE. As in Key Stage 3, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets included in their individual learning programmes. Higher attaining pupils

understand the complex elements of coastal erosion, using terms such as *swash*, *fetch*, and *longshore drift* accurately, and give balanced arguments as to whether eroding coastlines should or should not be conserved. Most can describe the process and remember its progress and the human effects.

147. In the sixth form, students continue to make satisfactory progress. They meticulously address topics such as the problems of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and retail development in urban areas. They are extending their understanding of the development of ecological systems and the human reactions, and the effect that humans have on ecological development. Higher attaining students are capable of lively presentations to their peers of the problems of living in peripheral areas.

148. In nearly all lessons, pupils' attitudes and response are at least satisfactory, and in many they are good. At all levels, the vast majority of pupils show great interest in their work. They listen attentively both to teachers and to their fellow pupils. All contributions are respected, whether they are correct or not. Most pupils readily volunteer answers. Work is mostly well presented, especially by the girls, and tasks, including homework, are normally finished as instructed.

149. The teaching throughout the school is always at least satisfactory, and is sometimes good and occasionally very good. Most teachers have a good depth of subject knowledge, which is used skilfully when questioning pupils. This was particularly well done in a Year 7 lesson on weather, when directed questioning kept the pupils' interest and raised their expectations of themselves. Clear aims and objectives are a feature of all lessons, so that pupils know exactly what they are required to do. Specified timings for tasks mean that pupils know what is expected for each part of the lesson and ensures that they maintain a tight focus. The use of summaries at the end of lessons checks that effective learning has taken place. In the best lessons, work is appropriately targeted towards pupils of different levels of attainment, and on these occasions pupils are stretched.

150. The leadership of the subject is good, with clear objectives and strategies that are detailed and shared by all of the teachers. The entire department responds well to the initiatives that are in place to raise standards and all share an enthusiasm for geography. There have been considerable improvements in the use of information technology since the last inspection. The recent review of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work is beginning to result in improvements in standards and in the numbers choosing to carry the subject forward into Key Stage 4.

## **History**

151. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was below the average for all maintained schools nationally. Girls' performance has been marginally better than the boys' over recent years, but it was more even in 1999. Over the past three years, the GCSE results at grades A\*-C have shown a steady improvement although remaining below average. These improvements may be accounted for by the better quality of teaching and the aptitudes of pupils opting to study the subject in Years 10 and 11. In the A-level examinations in 1999, all three students entered for the examination gained pass grades, although none achieved the higher grades of A or B. Because of the small number of students entered for the examination, comparisons with the national figures are not very meaningful. No students were entered for the A-level examinations in 1998.

152. From their current and recent work, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicated that pupils' attainment was well below the national average and at a lower level than other subjects in the school. Inspection findings show that these figures considerably under-estimate the level of pupils' attainment. Pupils enter the school with limited historical skills but they soon develop them. For example, Year 8 pupils are able to identify long- and short-term causes of the English civil war. By Year 9, they have a good range of historical competencies, with the higher attaining pupils able to analyse historical sources, identify primary and secondary evidence and comment on its reliability. In a Year 9 lesson on the evacuation of Dunkirk, which examined film, painting and writing depicting the event, many pupils



in a middle ability set were able to proffer convincing explanations of the variously biased views selected for analysis. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 have a good range of historical knowledge.

153. Based on the work seen during inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is also in line with the standards expected nationally, indicating an improvement in standards over the 1999 GCSE results. Pupils have satisfactory historical knowledge but many have difficulty explaining the causes of historical events and answers to examination level questions can lack depth. A Year 11 group, learning about the injustices inherent in the Treaty of Versailles, were able to relate these to events that happened later in the century, writing and speaking with fluency. In the sixth form, students' attainment is also in line with course expectations. They have good research skills, using information from different historical periods to help account for specific events and develop arguments. They use their good recall of various events in the twentieth century to enhance their answers to A-level style questions.

154. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3 and they are generally committed to their studies. Careful planning by the teachers, effective consolidation of earlier learning and a clear focus on learning objectives are positive factors in assisting their learning. Pupils are usually clear about their tasks, which have the right degree of challenge and are achievable. Most ask for and get help when it is needed. Work is usually effectively planned to meet individual needs so that all pupils progress at the same rate. At Key Stage 4, pupils' progress is satisfactory. Teaching carefully consolidates earlier learning, so that progress builds on what is known and is reinforced. Most pupils are engaged in suitable activities but the pace of learning can sometimes be slow. At times, there is insufficient adaptation of work for the wide range of attainment in some classes. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported but, at times, some lower attainers find the resources used impenetrable due to the complexity of the language. In the sixth form, students make good progress. In Year 12, the one-to-one teaching is a significant factor. Students and teacher work in a collegiate fashion and discussion consolidates and extends their knowledge and understanding. Year 13 lessons maintain an appropriate focus on the needs of the A-level examination, honing the information required for examination success.

155. Most pupils enjoy history and respond well, showing strong motivation. They work well in pairs and small groups, helping one another with their tasks. They participate with confidence in the lesson, expressing views easily and respecting each other's opinions. Pupils relate well to their teachers and to one another. Concentration rarely falters and, even where the work lacks stimulation, pupils remain on task. They move from task to task with alacrity and are immediately obedient to teachers' instructions.

156. The teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge. A range of interesting activities usually maintains pupils' interest but work is not always pitched at the correct level for all levels of attainment. Sometimes lower attaining pupils in mixed ability classes are unable to cope with the level of the work set and, as a consequence, lose concentration to the detriment of their progress. Practice, however, is inconsistent. In contrast, a very good Year 7 lesson on the Romans was enhanced by resources prepared for three levels of ability, so that all pupils were appropriately challenged and progressed very well. Teachers work at a good pace, constantly challenging pupils to do better. They relate well to and effectively manage pupils at all stages of the lesson. These factors help ensure that progress is good. A very good Year 9 lesson used information technology to develop an annotated map, showing the location of and reasons for the outbreak of the Second World War. It was notable for the very effective planning, which ensured that all pupils came to the lesson able to use the valuable time in the computer room in the most effective way. All made very good progress in their understanding of the significant issues in this study. In common with Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, work is satisfactorily marked and homework is used as an effective adjunct to lessons.

157. The teaching at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. It is less good than in Key Stage 3 due to some weaknesses in providing work to match the wide range of attainment of pupils in classes. This affects the pace of learning, which is slowed in trying to ensure that all keep up. Other aspects of teaching at Key Stage 4 are good. Teachers have good subject expertise, work at a good pace and have expectations of high quality work, which are often met. The teaching in the sixth form is good, with staff working with the small groups in a collaborative fashion. They always keep a strong focus on the needs of the A-level examination, frequently analysing recent questions set as they discuss specific topics. Teaching communicates an enthusiasm for and a love of the subject, which is infectious and has a positive effect on pupils' response and progress. It employs a good range of resources but, at times, can be over prescriptive and students get too few opportunities for independent learning.

158. The acting head of department has been in post for three months and inherited a poorly managed department. However, structures are now being put in place to enable the subject to move forward. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is beginning to be fully planned. However, appropriate and accurate assessment procedures are not yet in place. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were highly inaccurate, the result of a subjectivity which thorough procedures would avoid. The acting head of department is aware of this and aims to take action to inform assessment more fully, undertaking regular assessments and recording them systematically. Since the last inspection, attainment remains at a similar level, although there have been fluctuations in GCSE performance. The performance of the boys is now equal to that of the girls. Assessment, which was unsatisfactory, still has weaknesses but now meets National Curriculum requirements.

### **Information technology**

159. The school does not currently offer courses leading to GCSE and A-level examinations, although there are proposals to do so as part of the school's development as a Technology College. From their current work, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectation, better than the teachers' assessments undertaken at the end of the key stage in 1999, which were below average, would indicate. Pupils are confident in using the word processing program. Although their typing skills are slow, they are able to create a text, have knowledge of the cut and paste procedure to edit their work and are able to use the spell-check facility. Pupils are familiar with the construction of a database and are able to enter the necessary information, although some pupils experience difficulties retrieving and filtering the information. Pupils are able to use the simple formulae for mathematical calculations when using a spreadsheet and display their findings in graph form. Using a desktop publishing program, pupils place art images from a picture gallery, re-adjust the size to fit a publication and understand how to place text around a picture. Although pupils use the Logo program in their mathematics studies and computer-aided design in design and technology, their general understanding of control and measuring is underdeveloped.

160. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is in line with the standard expected. Pupils know about a range of applications and use them with confidence. They use the word processing program to support their work across the curriculum and display an understanding of a multi-media slide show presentation. Pupils use the desktop publishing program to enhance their work, for example when producing a flow chart, creating a front page of a newspaper, designing and printing greetings cards or presenting an anti-smoking poster in French. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of a database. They enter the necessary information, create the fields and retrieve selected information. Although the Internet facility is not yet fully functional, pupils have an understanding of its use and its benefits for research. Students' attainment in the sixth form is appropriate to support the courses they study. They have satisfactory knowledge of a range of applications and their use in a wider context.

161. Pupils make good progress at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils enter the school with limited previous experience but, with tasks to match their level of attainment, they soon gain confidence learning the basics of a word processing program. This progress is well supported with weekly lessons in Years 7 and 8 to develop their information technology skills. Their skills are further

developed in their work in subjects across the curriculum. Pupils in Year 8 learn to create databases and spreadsheets as part of their studies in science and mathematics. By the time pupils reach Year 9, their knowledge has been extended through using a variety of applications which they carry out with understanding. Pupils continue to make good progress during Key Stage 4 and skills learned earlier are developed across the curriculum using a range of applications. Teachers are aware of the needs of pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress and achieve the targets set for them.

162. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They enjoy working on computers and show a good level of interest. They are confident in discussing their work and previous experience. On the occasions when pupils have to share computers, they are sensible, help each other and show respect for equipment. Pupils concentrate well during lessons, and settle to work quickly. Their behaviour is good.

163. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, and often good. Teachers have secure knowledge and understanding and circulate well during lessons, keeping pupils on track. They manage pupils well, dealing quietly and efficiently with any unacceptable behaviour. Lessons are appropriately planned to meet the needs of the pupils and to ensure progression in their learning. In the more effective lessons, teachers use appropriate strategies to make sure that pupils understand a particular concept. This was noticeable in a Year 8 lesson, where the teacher gave a good demonstration of 'cropping an image' and in the effective use of a plenary session when pupils were asked to examine and comment on the work of their peers. These strategies had a positive effect on both their understanding and progress. In lessons, where the teacher's confidence and knowledge are not secure, support teachers give good help and guidance. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.

164. The curriculum is broad and balanced and well supported by detailed schemes of work to promote progression in pupils' learning. Although the areas of study to be delivered in the discrete lessons at Key Stage 3 are defined, more careful mapping of the provision would help to ensure that all of the strands of the National Curriculum have equal status across the curriculum. The overall management of the subject is good. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory and carefully coordinated by the subject manager. The network manager provides good support for teachers and pupils. Although there has been a programme of in-service training, some staff still lack specific skills and confidence. The resources for the subject have improved considerably since the previous inspection and are contributing well to pupils' progress.

### **Modern foreign languages**

165. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in both French and German was below the national averages, and below the results for most other subjects in the school. The performance of the girls was much better than that of the boys in both languages. Since the last inspection, the GCSE results in modern languages have shown some improvement from a very low base, but not as much as most other subjects in the school. No pupils were entered for two languages in the examinations in 1999. The number of students entered for the A-level examinations in 1998 and 1999 was small, which makes comparisons with the national figures inappropriate. In 1999, four out of the five students entered gained a pass grade, with three gaining a grade D and one an E.

166. From the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is below the standard expected nationally, and below the standard suggested by the teachers' assessments at the end of the key stage in 1999, which indicated that their attainment was in line with the national averages. Pupils answer questions, in a basic way, about such topics as illness, food and eating out, sports and pastimes, places and directions in towns and types of transport. The majority of pupils have good listening skills and concentrate well when listening to the teacher, to audiotapes or to other pupils speaking. In general, pupils are confident speakers and try hard with pronunciation. Their responses, however, are often rather short and longer conversations, with a number of exchanges, are infrequent. This limits pupils' language development and their ability to vary and experiment with languages. All

pupils prepare taped materials, starting from quite simple ones about themselves in Year 7. Although some of the work on the tapes is clearly read rather than learned, this provides a good basis for further work in Key Stage 4. Pupils' reading skills, in Key Stage 3, are generally adequate. There are reading schemes in use for both French and German, and pupils use their reading skills to find the answers to questions in their textbooks. Writing is the weakest of the four aspects of the subject. Pupils in Key Stage 3 build from writing single word answers to writing short sentences. There are few examples of extended writing, even by the higher attaining pupils, and where writing is undertaken pupils make too many mistakes with basic spellings, grammar and punctuation.

167. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is also below the standard expected, and reflects the results of the GCSE examinations in 1999. Pupils return to the topics covered during Key Stage 3 and add others such as writing about holidays and reports about their work experience. They also undertake an individual topic about a town or city in France or Germany. Pupils develop a wider range of spoken language and some interesting work was seen, for example, in a Year 11 class where pupils were discussing school rules and developing some of their own. In written work, pupils extend their vocabulary and the use of tenses to produce accounts of the area where they live and write letters describing their families and other people. In their spoken language, pupils continue to build on the base provided in Key Stage 3 and further develop their taped pieces in preparation for their 'Dossier Sonore' for the examination. The nature of the examination course provides wider opportunities for higher attaining pupils in all four aspects of the subject, but their written work still shows many basic errors.

168. Students in the sixth form achieve standards that are broadly in line with A-level course requirements. They write at greater length and there is a good improvement in the technical quality of their writing, especially in Year 13. Students participate effectively in longer conversations and discussions, and use a wide range of texts taken from magazines and newspapers for their reading.

169. In general, pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards in relation to their prior attainment. Girls attain higher standards than the boys at both key stages. A majority of higher attaining pupils do not reach their maximum level because of a lack of work that is adequately challenging for their level of attainment and little extension work for pupils who finish quickly. There are no significant differences across the four aspects of the subject, although with the emphasis on speaking this is the strongest element. Writing is the weakest of the aspects because many pupils do not have a well-developed grasp of the basics of spelling, punctuation and grammar in either French or German.

170. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and students make good progress in the sixth form. Boys, in general, make less progress than girls. Higher attaining pupils make insufficient progress in Key Stage 3 because the work in class is often not sufficiently challenging. This is less marked in Key Stage 4 where the examination requirements allow greater flexibility. Pupils at the start of Year 10 who are studying two languages are making rapid and significant gains at the beginning of their course. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and are helped by the setting arrangements and the effective support they receive in some classes.

171. The vast majority of pupils behave well in class, but the behaviour of a minority of pupils, particularly in Year 9, is challenging. Most pupils concentrate well and show satisfactory attitudes to work. Behaviour and attitudes in the sixth form are good. There are limited opportunities for personal study in Key Stage 3, but these are better in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, where examination requirements provide greater flexibility. Pupils take care of property and are courteous and polite to visitors. Relationships in class and with their teachers are generally good.

172. Overall, the quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory and occasionally good, particularly in the sixth form. All teachers have good subject knowledge. In most lessons, both teachers and pupils make satisfactory use of the language being taught. All teachers have good pupil control. Pupils' books are regularly marked and corrected although there are some exceptions. Longer-term planning for lessons is satisfactory and plans for individual lessons are generally good, although inconsistent amongst teachers.

The use of information technology, to enhance and enrich the curriculum, is satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, teachers make good use of the foreign language to help pupils think about and vary their use of language. These lessons also present good challenges at an appropriate level and teachers have high expectations of the pupils' performance. Where teaching is less effective, pupils learn little from the lesson because the pace is unsatisfactory and pupils are often not working hard enough. In these lessons, pupils have limited opportunities to practise and most of the time is spent completing short listening and writing tasks. In a number of lessons where teaching is satisfactory overall, there are features of the lessons that are unlikely to raise pupils' attainment significantly. Some work is not sufficiently well focused on the National Curriculum levels to raise pupils' attainment. Consequently, the work tends to be set at where the pupils are rather than with raising attainment as the main focus. Not enough work is specifically tailored to the needs of higher attaining pupils, especially in Key Stage 3.

173. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced, although the time allocated for pupils studying two languages in Key Stage 4 is barely adequate. The length of lessons at 70 minutes is long for modern languages and too long for younger pupils to sustain their concentration. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good. Assessments are completed after each unit of work and include target setting for pupils and some pupil self-evaluation. Although accommodation is satisfactory overall, rooms are dispersed around the school, which has implications for the distribution and duplication of resources. A number of trips and school exchanges with schools in France and Germany make a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development and to their language skills. There is good provision for social development in lessons through sharing, taking turns and working together in groups. A strong moral framework exists in lessons and pupils are taught right from wrong, with teachers providing good role models.

174. The head of department has improved aspects of the work of the department, including the revision of schemes of work and the departmental handbook. These documents are thorough and comprehensive, and provide a good level of continuity across and within the key stages. The regular, structured monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject has been insufficient to identify and remedy weaknesses and to improve standards. The line management arrangements and the school's senior management have failed to monitor departmental performance with sufficient rigour and this is a significant factor in the failure to raise attainment. The previous report judged that a good platform had been established upon which improvements could be built. However, progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

## **Music**

175. In the GCSE examination in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was below the national average but above average for those gaining grades A\*-G. The boys considerably outperformed the girls in the examinations. When compared with the previous year, when only three pupils were entered for the examination, the results are lower. Although the 1999 cohort was larger and more pupils were entered for the examination, the comparatively small numbers involved make it difficult to make meaningful comparisons. In the sixth form, the one student entered for the AS examination in 1999 achieved a grade D.

176. From their current work, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectation, similar to the standard indicated by teachers' assessments at the end of the key stage in 1999. Pupils' listening skills are well established. They identify different styles of music and

use the appropriate vocabulary when describing the main elements. This was noticeable in a Year 7 lesson, with pupils accurately identifying the waltz style of the music and the instruments played. In performing, pupils are able to recognise the notes on the keyboard and play simple melodies, reading from formal notation. Some pupils have knowledge of the construction of a primary chord and use them with a melody. In a Blues topic in Year 9, pupils placed the correct chords at the appropriate time in the music. Pupils have satisfactory technical knowledge and are able to transfer this knowledge to their compositions, which are beginning to have structure. However, they do not have the opportunity to develop their improvisation skills, resulting in compositions that lack creativity and individual style. Attainment overall has improved since the last inspection but composition skills are still underdeveloped.

177. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above the standard expected nationally, higher than the 1999 GCSE results would indicate. Many of the pupils are competent instrumentalists and have good technical knowledge. These skills are used effectively in their compositions that have structure and development. Pupils' understanding of the main historical developments in music is good and they describe accurately the different styles of music. This knowledge also contributes to their creative development. Although pupils use information technology to support their compositions, the programs available do not give them the opportunity to layer sounds and produce compositions that have originality. Standards overall have improved since the last inspection. In the sixth form, students' attainment is above the standard expected. Their technical knowledge is well established and this is used effectively to develop their compositions in a variety of styles. They have good understanding of the set works and can explain their structure and form using the appropriate vocabulary.

178. Pupils' progress during Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Although pupils' previous musical experience is varied, they reach the required standard at the end of the key stage in most aspects. In their early lessons, emphasis is placed on developing technical and rhythmic skills. This knowledge is effectively transferred during keyboard sessions. These skills are further developed in Year 8, with pupils playing more difficult melodies with increased rhythmic accuracy. Pupils in Year 9 continue to make progress, and with their increased technical and listening knowledge, play melodies that are rhythmically correct. Their progress with composition work, however, is slower. The main reason for this is the limited opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills. During Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress. Pupils' theoretical knowledge is well developed through their instrumental lessons. Through a structured programme of work, they build and consolidate on previous experiences and use this knowledge to develop their compositions. Although pupils with special educational needs do not receive extra support, teachers are aware of their needs and they make good progress to achieve the targets set for them. The progress of pupils who play musical instruments is good.

179. Pupils' attitudes in lessons are good. They listen carefully to instructions, take an interest in the subject, have a positive approach and enjoy practical work. Behaviour is generally good and they are attentive when other pupils are performing. They use equipment with care and are keen to discuss their previous experiences. Their attendance at extra-curricular activities is good and they take pride in participating in the ensembles.

180. The quality of the teaching is at least satisfactory and more often good, especially at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Teachers have good knowledge of music, know their pupils well, transfer their enthusiasm to the pupils and use their skills effectively to illustrate the music. Examples of this include teachers using their keyboard skills to demonstrate styles of music and adding accompaniments to pupils' compositions. This aided pupils' progress. Where teaching is good, there are clear explanations at the beginning of the lesson with clearly defined targets. Teachers manage pupils well and deal sensitively with unacceptable behaviour. The planning of lessons is satisfactory, with an appropriate choice of music to promote listening and rhythm development. However, the teaching of composition is very formal and pupils are not given enough opportunity to develop their creative skills through improvisation. At times, the teaching is weakened as there is insufficient evaluation at the end of the lesson to assess pupils' progress and an inadequate amount of time spent on an activity, resulting in limited opportunities to improve a skill. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.

181. The curriculum is generally balanced. The schemes of work have been re-written since the previous inspection but the shorter-term plans lack detail, particularly in the area of composition. The assessment of pupils' work in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, although satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. Pupils' work is orally assessed at the end of the majority of lessons but, due to the lack of equipment, performances and compositions are not audio recorded and pupils are unaware of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. Leadership of the department is satisfactory and the head of department has worked hard to develop initiatives. Although dialogue between teachers has improved since the previous inspection, departmental development would benefit from a more united approach to teaching styles and curricular content. The accommodation of the department is unsatisfactory. The two teaching areas are not suited, practice areas are insufficient and pupils are often taught in non-specialist rooms.

### **Physical education**

182. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well above the national average and the trend over the past three years has been one of improvement. The results are higher than for other subjects in the school. Girls performed far better than the boys, reversing the situation in 1998. In the A-level examination in 1999, all the relatively small number of students entered gained grades A-E, with the majority gaining the higher grades of A or B. These results are better than the national averages.

183. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the standard expected nationally, and broadly reflects the teachers' assessments at the end of the key stage in 1999, although a higher proportion of pupils at that time were working beyond the expected level. In basketball, by the end of the key stage, pupils have developed satisfactory skills in marking their opponents, passing accurately and receiving the ball, and are able to apply these skills in more complex game situations. The lower attaining pupils have weaker basic skills of passing and catching. Pupils' attainment in rugby is lower than in other activities. The basic skills of passing and handling the ball are quite low. In dance, the higher attaining pupils display precision and fluency, allied to good timing to both the music and their partners. Average attaining pupils are not as poised but link their motifs clearly to the music. Lower attainers are less confident and rather hesitant in their movement. In gymnastics, the girls are performing at a higher level than the boys. The health related fitness course reveals a developing understanding of how the human body reacts to exercise.

184. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is also in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 10, who were assessed in 1999 by their teachers at the end of Year 9, attain high standards in a broad range of games activities. In badminton, the higher attaining pupils effectively evaluate and analyse each other's work in the performance of the serve and the drive. The average and lower attainers find this more difficult. In a soccer lesson, pupils of all abilities engage in decision making about attacking and defensive positions at a free kick. Pupils with limited skills in sending the ball had to adapt distance to ensure some success. In GCSE lessons, pupils are developing their badminton skills and using technical language to describe their work on fitness. Sixth form students do very well in the A-level sport studies course and are attaining higher than average standards.

185. Pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress during Key Stage 3. A good example occurred in a health related fitness lesson where the teacher's questions enabled boys and girls to give examples of stamina and strength activities based on their learning from an earlier lesson. In a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, pupils showed how counterbalance with a partner could be developed from individual work. The higher attaining pupils built sequences maintaining body tension, a feature that was lacking amongst the remainder of the class. At Key Stage 4, pupils' progress is good in the GCSE lessons and satisfactory in the remainder. In a lesson on fitness, they made good progress following

questions and answers to arrive at an agreed definition. In badminton, pupils with a clearer understanding of the ready position made greater progress in improving the drive. In the A-level sports studies course, students make good progress. This was clearly observed over two lessons where students proposed a title for their study and followed this with a clear, knowledgeable and confident presentation in the subsequent lesson.

186. As in the last inspection, pupils are well motivated, respond well and collaborate effectively with each other. They work well in pairs, groups and small teams in a variety of activities across the curriculum. Attendance and participation rates are high. Pupils and teachers have very good relationships, which is a reflection of the positive ethos within the department.

187. The quality of teaching is good overall as it was in the last inspection. It varies from unsatisfactory to excellent, but most is good. Teaching is characterised by a good range of subject knowledge, the creation of opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate their own and others' work, the use of assessment to inform planning and the good use of resources. In dance, gymnastics and badminton, prompt cards assist pupils to plan and evaluate their work. Weaknesses are few but planning to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs is weak and, while focusing on the grouping of pupils and the learning outcomes, does not identify suitable tasks to meet the full range of attainment. In addition, in the one unsatisfactory lesson pupils worked on their own in groups received minimal support from the teacher and consequently wandered off task. The marking of written work at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form shows some evaluative comments but it is not consistent.

188. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and, with the addition of GCSE in Key Stage 4, the recent introduction of the Junior Sports Leader Award in Year 11 and A-Level in the sixth form, is broad and balanced. Units of work, together with lesson overviews for each year group, have been developed and linked to the assessment and profiling system, thus enhancing pupils' progress and attainment. Pupils value the very good extra-curricular programme, which covers a wide range of activities. The department has not yet acknowledged the contribution it could make to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The head of department is new and with support from colleagues is making an impact on the department's work. Responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff have the opportunity to teach across the whole curriculum. Major equipment is maintained annually but no regular, recorded risk assessment has taken place. Resources are good and well used to support teaching. The development plan is weak and lacks timescales, costs, success criteria, responsibilities and an indication of progress. The accommodation is good but the dispersed location of the changing rooms causes difficulties for staff in supervising pupils.

## **Religious education**

189. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the results of pupils who followed the full course in religious studies were above the national average at grades A\*-C and those who followed the short course in religious education were in line with the national average. In the A-level examinations, the results were slightly below the national average but this comparison is based on a small number of students. Girls achieve higher grades in the examinations than boys and the disparity between them is greater than usual.

190. Evidence from the inspection shows that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus. The school does not have information to show the proportions of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 who achieve the outcomes specified in the agreed syllabus. Pupils know the major beliefs and practices of Christianity and of the other religions studied. They understand how religious ideas relate to their own experience of life. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is also in line with expectations. They know what religion is and how it affects people's lives. They recognise and respect different points of view and give reasons to support their own opinions. In the sixth form, the attainment of students on the A-level course is below average.



Some lack knowledge of parts of the syllabus content and all are weak in their understanding of theory.

191. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3. From the start of Year 7, pupils begin to select and present information. They develop the ability to express ideas and feelings in their own words. Their progress is excellent when visual resources are used to stimulate pupils into asking penetrating questions. At Key Stage 4, their progress is also good. In the one lesson per week allocated to the subject, most pupils make the gains expected in their knowledge and understanding, and also develop their skills of evaluation. At A-level, students' progress is satisfactory. The students find the intellectual challenge of theoretical knowledge difficult but the good teaching allows them to make sufficient gains to do themselves justice in the examination.

192. Pupils respond very well to religious education. At Key Stage 3 and at Key Stage 4, their attitudes are very positive. Pupils always behave well in lessons and are courteous to teachers and to each other. They listen attentively and are keen to answer questions. In written work, they sustain their concentration well. When considering people's beliefs and feelings they show respect. When in groups they are good at working collaboratively. They take pride in the presentation and completion of tasks in their exercise books. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to opportunities to practise and improve their basic skills. On the A-level course, students are committed to doing their best despite finding the work challenging.

193. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. The teachers are specialists who use their expertise to give correct information, and to explain ideas with clarity and coherence. Skilful use of visual resources, such as artefacts and extracts from videos, stimulates pupils to think hard about different and often difficult aspects of religious belief and practice. Lessons are planned very effectively with clear objectives and a detailed sequence of activities. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are given opportunities to practise and develop their skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Work is marked regularly and pupils benefit from constructive comments with clear targets. Homework successfully extends and develops what is done in class. Teaching on the A-level course is carefully matched to the requirements of the syllabus and the needs of the pupils.

194. Since the last inspection, there has been a big improvement. At Key Stage 4, the statutory requirements of the agreed syllabus are now met and every pupil follows a GCSE examination course. General provision in the sixth form is achieved through termly one-day events. Pupils' attainment and results at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are now at the standard expected. Pupils make better progress because more time has been allocated and they receive better teaching. Religious education contributes well to pupils' personal development, especially to the moral and cultural dimensions of their lives. Only at A-level has success been slow to show through. All the improvements are due to the very good leadership that the department enjoys. The department has planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated its own development and shown that it has the capacity to secure further improvement.

## **Business and vocational education**

195. The school provides a good range of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) subjects at Foundation and Intermediate levels for pupils in Key Stage 4, and at Intermediate and Advanced levels for students in the sixth form. The numbers taking vocational courses have increased over the past three years, particularly in leisure and tourism. In 1999, nearly all pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 achieved at least a pass in the Leisure and Tourism Part 1 Foundation and Intermediate awards and many achieved a merit or distinction. In the sixth form, all students achieved at least a pass in the Business Advanced and Intermediate courses and in the Leisure and Tourism Advanced course in 1999, with most achieving merit or distinction awards. These results were better than the national average. Standards in the vocational courses have improved considerably since the last inspection when the school's results were close to the national average.

196. From the evidence of their current work, pupils' attainment overall by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the standard expected. This is reflected in a sound understanding of their respective vocational areas. For example in health and social care, pupils are able to identify and talk about different types of relationships and provide mature responses to specific issues, explaining their reasons when questioned. In leisure and tourism, pupils are able to explain about the role of people in business organisations and have interviewed, researched and analysed job adverts successfully. Pupils have appropriate information technology skills, mostly in applications for communicating and handling information in assignments and generally at the level required for the qualification. In the sixth form, students' attainment is at least in line with the requirements of the range of GNVQ courses and often better than them. Most assignments are well presented and the quality of work is often of an above average standard. Most students are able to talk with confidence about their work. They are able to research and analyse information, identifying sources and cross-referencing data to verify. Most evaluate their work carefully and plan their work to meet deadlines, recording any difficulties they may have. This was seen to good effect in a Year 12 lesson in health and social care during an evaluation of their presentation of a topic to the class.

197. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, with some Year 10 classes in leisure and tourism making good progress. In leisure and tourism, pupils apply their knowledge to the locality and, as a consequence, are gaining an understanding of the relevance of accessibility and other factors, for example in supporting a hotel. They are also becoming more confident in researching and presenting their findings to others. In health and social care, pupils are developing a wide range of skills, including monitoring, planning, interviewing, presentation and evaluation. In Year 12 Engineering, students are developing greater accuracy in their technical drawings to show the construction process, although their knowledge of the detail of the theory is a little slim. However, this improved after the written assignment.

198. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are mostly satisfactory and more often good. They are attentive and courteous to one another and with their teachers. They listen carefully and are willing to share ideas, which they generally do well, in discussion. In most lessons, they are prepared to ask questions when they do not understand. Occasionally, as in a Year 11 Part 1 Manufacturing lesson, pupils do not use the time provided for independent work effectively, indulging in off-task conversation and showing a lack of enthusiasm for their work.

199. The quality of teaching overall is mostly satisfactory and is frequently good. In the most successful lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to help and challenge pupils, plan the lesson well and share the lesson objectives with the pupils. In such lessons, pupils generally make good progress in their learning. In one Year 11 lesson, the objectives were not conveyed clearly enough to the pupils and the teacher's expectations were insufficiently high, with the result that pupils made little progress. Relationships are generally good and most teachers manage their classes well. Teachers

use an appropriate range of strategies to motivate and maintain pupils' interest, including the effective use of questioning to ensure that all understand what is expected. Staff give strong encouragement and helpful feedback to pupils to enable them to identify weaknesses so they can improve their work.

200. Leadership and management of the department are good. Documentation is thorough and provides helpful guidance to staff on a range of issues. Appropriate support is provided for pupils with special educational needs to enable them to make progress. Resources are generally satisfactory. Accommodation for the GNVQ courses, which is very cramped in some lessons and limits the range of teaching, learning and presentation strategies and approaches that can be used, is generally poor.

## **Drama**

201. In the GCSE examination in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was above the national average. The performance of boys was better than that of the girls. Over the past three years, the results have been above the national average and at times well above average. The number of pupils studying drama is steadily rising. In the A-level examinations in 1999, half the students entered gained grades A-E, but the small numbers involved make comparison with the national figures inappropriate.

202. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in drama is in line with the standard expected for 14-year olds. Pupils follow a short course to prepare them for the subject at Key Stage 4. By the end of the key stage, pupils are aware of the audience but, in rehearsal, fail to recognise the needs of their spectators. Pupils have not yet developed a sense of space on the stage. Some lose their place in a script and are not able to recover easily or to conceal what has happened. They are not yet fused into a team when acting on stage. As an audience, pupils listen carefully and quietly even when performers have problems. They are able to add characters and stage directions to a blank script. Some have a limited knowledge of basic stage terminology.

203. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is in line with GCSE course requirements. Pupils create and present pieces on a theme such as the environment. They write naturalistic dialogue and sometimes have original ideas, such as when two girls improvising with a parasol pretended to be children confusing it with an explosive. They have a good understanding of what makes a drama and of what is dramatically effective. They confidently perform expressive movement. Their speech is natural and fluent but sometimes indistinct. They undertake background research for the pieces they are devising for their examination or for other performances.

204. By the end of the sixth form, students' attainment is above the standard normally found. Students act well and are aware of many of the practical problems that are likely to arise in the course of a production. They are aware that an expressive movement needs to be visible from all parts of the hall. Although there is no particular difference in their knowledge, the girls are more dominant in organising practical work than the boys and so gain some experience in directing. Some good written work is produced, including scripts, a production diary and a good evaluative account of a performance attended. The small amount of written work seen is of good quality, showing the writers to have a good grasp of the subject and to have developed considerable critical awareness.

205. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress. In Key Stage 3, pupils learn quickly the basics of drama and the geography of the stage. All pupils progress well, partly because they are able to choose tasks which they enjoy. They embark confidently on the targets of creating, performing and responding. During Key Stage 4, pupils make progress in developing character studies and in scripting to delineate character. They also progress in movement, imagining, gesture and voice projection. They begin to understand how to tackle a theme and to see what arouses interest in the audience. Sixth form

students make good progress in writing and presenting pieces for audiences of different ages. They learn how to co-operate while using their dramatic skills and they extend their ability to perform in a variety of spaces such as theatre-in-the-round, as was seen when Year 12 presented a piece on bullying for pupils in Year 7. The ability of the pupils to work well alone or in groups, their good relationship with the teacher, and their willingness to take the initiative and to shoulder responsibility when working with others are factors that promote their progress. The department's policy of fostering self-evaluation is also a strength.

206. The attitudes of the pupils to their work change as they grow, so that by the time they are taking their examinations, most have developed considerable commitment to and enthusiasm for the subject. They enjoy their lessons and are eager to co-operate with the teacher and with one another. They behave well and treat each other with consideration. They enjoy presenting pieces to audiences both inside and outside the school. They make many contributions to assemblies, which they regard as useful stage practice.

207. The teaching is never less than good and occasionally very good. It is mainly provided by the head of performing arts and by an instructor who has a close connection with a local theatre. This connection is an asset to the department and is used to enrich the experience of the pupils. The instructor has good knowledge and understanding of practical stagecraft and does most of the teaching. The head of performing arts carries out assessments and supervises all written work. Lessons are well planned and delivered. The management of pupils is good and there are no discipline problems. Relationships are excellent and the atmosphere is generally purposeful and constructive. Pupils with special educational needs are given specific help and attention to enable them to make appropriate progress in their learning.

208. Since the last inspection, accommodation has improved in the sense that it is no longer in the school canteen. The teaching takes place on the stage of the school hall but whenever there are examinations, drama lessons have to take place elsewhere. Resources have improved in terms of materials, scripts and electrical equipment. However, the lack of storage space for costumes and stage properties close to the drama teaching area is a considerable disadvantage. Schemes of work are better organised and more thoroughly planned because there is more knowledge of examination requirements as the head of performing arts is an assessor for an examination board. Drama makes a greater contribution to the school in general through assemblies, productions, presentations to outside agencies and other departments.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

209. Thirteen inspectors, including a lay inspector, spent a total of 54 days in the school, gathering first hand evidence. During the week, 228 lessons or parts of lessons were inspected. Some 205 hours were spent in the direct observation of lessons, discussions with pupils and the scrutiny of their work. In addition, inspectors attended assemblies, a large number of morning and afternoon registration sessions, and a range of extra-curricular activities. All teachers present in the school during the week of the inspection were observed teaching at least once and most on several occasions. Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils, including all the available written work of a representative sample of six pupils from each year group and a sample of pupils with a statement of special educational need. Informal discussions were held with pupils during lessons and at other times. Inspectors looked at pupils' work on display in classrooms and around the school.

210. Planned discussions were also held with all members of staff with management and other responsibilities; the chair of the governing body and four other governors; several teachers, including newly qualified staff; and many non-teaching and support staff. A wide range of documentation provided by the school was analysed, including the school's development and budget plans, school policies, schemes of work and teachers' planning. Before the inspection, the Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 14 parents/guardians. Responses from 131 parents' questionnaires were analysed.

## 211. 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	1028	39	168	35

### · Teachers and classes

#### · Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	61.95
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.95

#### · Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff:	15
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	481.3

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	78.3%
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	23
	KS4	20

### · Financial data

Financial year:	1998/99
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	£
Total Income	2,211,027
Total Expenditure	2,232,700
Expenditure per pupil	2,368
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 51,200
Balance carried forward to next year	- 72,873

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1028

Number of questionnaires returned: 130

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	13	59	17	10	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	31	56	4	8	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	15	48	27	8	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	15	55	19	9	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	16	59	11	9	4
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	22	69	5	3	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	20	55	18	6	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	15	58	11	11	5
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	17	59	15	7	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	16	57	15	10	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	33	48	9	6	4

### Other issues raised by parents

- Some parents are concerned that the school does not deal effectively enough with incidences of bullying in the school.