

INSPECTION REPORT

FOREST SCHOOL

Winnersh

LEA area: Wokingham

Unique reference number: 110061

Headteacher: Mr Stan Grue

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sue Kearney
18006

DATES OF INSPECTION: 27 – 31 MARCH 2000

INSPECTION NUMBER: 186408

INSPECTION CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 10 OF THE SCHOOL INSPECTIONS ACT 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	Robin Hood Lane Winnersh Wokingham Berks
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Price
Date of previous inspection:	4/12/1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Sue Kearney	Registered inspector	Non National Curriculum subjects	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Joanna Illingworth	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work with parents?
Marie Gibbon		English including literacy and drama	
Paul Metcalf		Mathematics including numeracy	
David Jones		Science	
Trevor Davies		Design and technology	Efficiency
Ged Gast		Information technology	Staffing Accommodation and resources
Brian Downes		Modern foreign languages	Assessment
Ian Stuart		Geography Religious education	
David Pink		History Special educational needs	
Tim Wright		Art	Sixth Form
John Ayerst		Music	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
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Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Forest School is a school for boys aged 11-18 and is regularly over subscribed. It is located on the outskirts of Reading. It is a bigger than average secondary school but with well below average numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, (2.04%) There are 2.7% of pupils with English as an additional language, which is higher than in most schools. However these pupils have no difficulties in accessing the curriculum and their literacy skills in English are well developed. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (12.6%) and for those with statements (1.1%) are both below average. The school has a stable population with approximately 25 pupils entering or leaving the school other than in Year 7. About 80 per cent of pupils aged 16 stay or go on to further education. There are 188 pupils in the Sixth Form which is broadly average.

The area around the school is advantaged socially compared with national statistics for children in high social class households and for the percentage of adults with higher education, according to Census data. The school is in the unitary authority of Wokingham. The area is characterised by good housing, relatively low unemployment and the area is generally prosperous.

Since the last inspection the school reports that the main characteristics of the school have seen little change. The standards of boys entering the school are above the national average with 74% awarded the expected level or above in the National Tests at the end of Key Stage 2. Although there are several selective and private schools in the area, boys entering Forest School have a normal range of ability. This is confirmed by standardised tests taken early in Year 7 which show well above average skills in number and slightly above average verbal skills.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school achieves high standards and the majority of boys have very good attitudes to work. Teaching is good and much is better although a small proportion of teaching (8%) is less than satisfactory. The achievement of pupils is good, including those with special educational needs. The school provides sound guidance to pupils and the management of the school is satisfactory with some concerns about monitoring and insufficient response to issues from the last inspection. The effectiveness of the school including the Sixth Form is satisfactory. The school gives satisfactory value for money because it achieves high standards and spending is above average.

What the school does well

- Promotes good learning through good teaching. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects and the management of pupils are particular strengths.
- Maintains high standards of pupils' work and examination results with particular strengths in the core subjects and in the Sixth Form.
- Provides good development of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Insists on very high standards of behaviour, attendance and relationships. Pupils' attitudes to school, their behaviour and their attendance are very good.
- Provides very well for pupils' personal development and particularly their moral development
- Provides a good range of extra curricular activities particularly in sport
- The community makes a very good contribution to learning through visits, trips and support from local employers for work experience and career guidance

What could be improved

- There has been insufficient progress in rectifying some of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection
- Whilst overall leadership and management are satisfactory, the school does not analyse its performance rigorously and has not always taken effective action to remedy weaknesses
- The governors do not fulfil all their responsibilities fully
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory in respect of its breadth and balance; there are several breaches of statutory requirements
- Teaching in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory and standards are below expectations
- Not enough use is being made of valuable information on the pupils' attainment to ensure that teaching

is matched sufficiently well to the pupils' needs

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory because pupils' individual targets are not clear and individual education programmes are not well monitored. The strategic view of special educational needs is unsatisfactory. However pupils with special educational needs make good progress across the school.
- Parents do not receive adequate information from the school, especially on the pupils' progress.
- There are not enough appropriate computers to support learning
- The school's priorities are not always reflected in its financial planning

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in 1995. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since that time although the standards of pupils work and examination results have been generally maintained. The leadership has not responded sufficiently to the issues raised in the last inspection and does not make rigorous efforts to monitor school performance. Governors do not fulfill their duties and the curriculum is unsatisfactory in breadth and balance with several breaches of statutory requirements.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Examination results at both Key Stage 3 and 4 are well above national averages for all schools. Results in the Sixth Form are above average when compared to all schools and improved significantly in 1999. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above expectation in the majority of subjects. Pupils enter the school with standards which are above expectation. Their achievement as they move through the school is good.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are above expectation. Standards of information technology are in line with expectation.

Overall the achievement of boys across the school is good although there are some groups of pupils where achievement is satisfactory. It is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. The overall quality of teaching and the curriculum is weaker in Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across the school although their progress in some lessons is unsatisfactory. The average points score in the GCSE examinations in 1999 across all subjects is below average when compared to the results of all boys and girls in similar schools. This is explained by inspection evidence which identifies that the most able boys do not achieve sufficiently in some subjects. Similarly the middle ability pupils aiming for 5 or more passes at GCSE are not achieving their potential in all subjects. A key factor in this is the limited use of assessment information to promote progress and inform teaching.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	All pupils have very good attitudes to school and their work

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good across the school
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are very good
Attendance	Attendance is very good

The promotion of good behaviour is a permanent target on the School Improvement Programme and is coordinated by the Headmaster. He sets high expectations of all the boys and has created a very strong ethos in the school since he was appointed nineteen years ago. This aspect of the school is greatly appreciated by pupils and parents and makes a significant contribution to learning across the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall 185	good	good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching across the school is good. It is good at Key Stage 3 and 4 and very good in the Sixth Form. However, there are a small but significant number of lessons where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory or poor. Over half the lessons seen were judged to be good or very good teaching which is similar to the previous inspection. 8 per cent of lessons, sixteen in all, were unsatisfactory or poor.

Teaching is consistently good in English, history, and geography. Teaching is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages. Some of the unsatisfactory teaching in subjects is related to non-specialist teachers who are part-time or on supply to cover staff absence. The majority of weaker teaching is seen in lessons in Key Stage 3 except in science, modern languages and religious education where it is seen in Key Stage 4. A particular feature of weaker teaching is the limited range of strategies employed to stimulate interest and learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of learning opportunities is good in the Sixth Form. The breadth and balance is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and 4 and statutory requirements are not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The support for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory with weaknesses in the targets set for individual pupils and some aspects of management.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for personal development is good overall. Pupils' moral development is very good, social development is good and cultural and spiritual development are satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care of pupils is satisfactory. Tutors and heads of year provide good support and behaviour is very well monitored. Educational guidance is satisfactory but the effective use of assessment information is unsatisfactory .

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is satisfactory but the quality of the information provided to parents is unsatisfactory.

The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for religious education across the school, information technology in both keystages, and design and technology in Key Stage 4. National Curriculum requirements for modern foreign languages are not fully met. The information technology component of the requirements for art and music are not met. The quality and range of the curriculum at both Key Stage 3 and 4 is unsatisfactory. It is good in the sixth form.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headmaster and other key staff	Satisfactory overall but with some significant weaknesses in both senior management and other key staff. There is a good ethos in the school but monitoring and evaluation of some levels of school activity is unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory because of failure to meet statutory requirements and insufficient impact on the shaping of the direction of the school
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory because of limited monitoring of teaching and a lack of performance management and accountability across the school
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory with a strong focus on buildings and weaknesses in the link between development planning and financial planning and the impact on spending decisions

The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory. There are insufficient computers of appropriate quality and this is restricting the access of many subjects to information technology and has a negative impact on learning.

The governors and senior management team has very successfully created an ethos over many years which undoubtedly supports high standards. They have prioritised throughout the school community high expectations of good behaviour and examination success. The headmaster has been in post for nineteen years and provides a very clear vision of how he expects boys to respond to their teachers, to work hard, to respect the school code and to enjoy their time in Forest School. This vision is greatly appreciated by parents and valued by governors. However, in maintaining such a strong focus the headmaster and senior team have given insufficient attention to other aspects of management, particularly the need for the highest quality teaching in all areas and a balanced and effective curriculum.

There are very good procedures for ensuring best value at the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The majority of pupils like school, are making good progress and behave well. · Pupils are well taught and are expected to work hard · Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible · The school is well led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Information to parents, particularly about pupils' progress · Links with parents · The amount of homework · A minority of pupils do not like school and are not making progress · Some parents feel that the range of extra-curricular activities is too narrow

A large number of parents responded to the survey of parental opinion prior to the inspection. The majority of replies express approval of and support for the school. However, a significant minority believe that parents are not well informed about pupils' progress and that the school does not work closely with them. The proportion of parents with these concerns is more than usual in a school of this type. Some parents are also unhappy with the varying amount of homework that their sons are given to do at home.

The inspection confirms some parents' views including the dissatisfaction regarding the amount and quality of information on pupils' progress and the links with parents. It also identifies a small minority of

pupils who are under achieving. However the inspection does not agree with the concerns about homework and the range of extra-curricular activities. Inspection evidence agrees fully with the parents' views about the good ethos, good behaviour and good personal development which are all aspects positively promoted by the senior team. However it finds some significant weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

THE SCHOOL'S RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Examination results at both Key Stage 3 and 4 are well above national averages for all schools. Results in the Sixth Form are above average when compared to all schools. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above expectation in the majority of subjects. Pupils enter the school with standards which are above expectation. Their achievement as they move through the school is good. When the examination results in 1999 are compared to those of all boys and girls in similar schools, standards at the age of 14 are average but at the age of 16 are below average. The inspection confirms that this is the result of small groups of pupils who are underperforming in some subjects.
2. In the national tests in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils at the age of 14 are well above the national average for all schools in mathematics and science and are above the national average in English. When the results in English are compared to the results for boys nationally, they are well above average. Comparison with similar schools indicate examination results which are average across the core subjects of English, mathematics and science with standards in mathematics well above, English well below and science broadly average. The school is proud of the success it has in raising the literacy levels of boys. They enter the school with literacy skills which are less well developed than their other key skills and this makes comparisons with similar schools unreliable. Standards of literacy seen during the inspection are above expectation. The results across the three core subjects have followed the national trend over the last three years. Similarly high standards are recorded by the school at the end of Key Stage 3 in geography, history, information technology and music. Results are well below expectations in modern languages and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in design and technology is below expectations.
3. Boys achieve high standards in examinations at the age of 16. Over the last three years there has been an increase in the proportion of boys achieving grades A*-C in GCSE examinations. When all grades are considered there has been a similar pattern over the last three years but the rate of increase is below the national trend. This is recognised by the school and early intervention in improving the literacy skills of specific groups of boys takes place in Key Stage 3. In the 1999 GCSE results boys achieved the highest standards in drama, German, geography and physical education. Results in French are well below those in other subjects. The most able pupils are not performing to their potential in science, information technology, and art. Standards seen in work during the inspection in the majority of subjects are slightly lower than examination results indicate. This is because the timing of the inspection came before the intense revision sessions leading up to the examinations. The school also predicts a weaker cohort of pupils in Year 11 although the assessment data does not support this assertion. The inspection evidence indicates some groups of pupils who are not achieving to their full potential including some higher attaining pupils and some middle and low attainers in some subjects.
4. Students' results in GCE A Level courses are above average and are improving steadily. The best results are in English, mathematics and art. Results in 1999 are below expectation in biology and business studies although teacher assessment confirms that these results are as expected for the students entered for these courses. The school does not use prior attainment data sufficiently to be able to track the progress of different groups of students.
5. The school has set overall targets for grades A*- C at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000. These targets are broadly similar to the previous year and do not represent any significant challenge to the school. There are no targets for individual subjects. The school could not produce targets for National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science although they report that internal targets exist. Teacher assessments in other subjects are not rigorously analysed. The school does not use assessment data sufficiently to make subjects accountable for performance and standards. There is some limited use made of the results of standardised tests taken when boys first enter the school and these inform the arrangements for grouping pupils. They also support the identification of weaker pupils in Year 8 for additional focus on the development of literacy across Key Stage 3.
6. Standards of oracy and literacy in the school are generally above expectation and although there is some variation between subjects it is always satisfactory. Two years ago the school identified the need

to improve pupils' access to reading across the whole curriculum. A literacy strategy was established which provides a very clear analysis of pupils' needs and a systematic programme of reading recovery. It involves pupils, parents, older students in the school and teachers across a range of subjects. This effective strategy has been recognised by the local authority as a model of good practice and has resulted in identifiable progress in reading for the majority of pupils who took part.

7. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum and the effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills are good. There is no whole school numeracy policy but the mathematics department has made a good response to the issue of numeracy highlighted in the last report and now provides regular numeracy homework, which actively encourages the involvement of parents. Standards of numeracy are above expectation.
8. Pupils' information technology skills are in line with the standard expected for their age and they improve in Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils have average standards of keyboard skills. They are able to use a word processor, presentation software, a spreadsheet and a database effectively to support their work in the core-course and aspects of their work in English, mathematics, geography and history. Pupils produce and incorporate simple graphics from different sources and use a variety of text and font styles effectively for different purposes. All pupils' are able to use a simple design package well by Year 9 and invest much care in the research and design process within design and technology, to produce graphical and manufactured outcomes. Skills are currently underdeveloped in the experience of measuring and modelling, as pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop and apply these competencies. Some pupils are able to develop a good standard of research skills through their use of CD ROM's and the Internet within geography and science, and by using Library facilities. Pupils' understanding and use of control is above average and they gain good opportunities in Years 7 and 8 in design and technology, to develop their knowledge of simple programme languages for both on-screen and physical control systems.
9. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards within the GCSE information technology course are well above average, but all other pupils do not follow a planned programme of study in information technology. Those taking a music GCSE and A-level explore the possibilities of composition and performance using computers. In science, physical education and in design and technology, further developments in measurement and control leads to the gathering and use of data about experiments, fitness and the development of circuit design. Information technology is used effectively by a significant proportion of boys in Business Studies in Key Stage 4.
10. In the sixth form, students who are not following a course with an information technology component are able to take RSA CLAIT (computer learning and information technology) to Level 1. Through their study using computers, many pupils are developing a broader understanding of the impact of new technologies on the lives of people.
11. The achievement of boys across the school is good. It is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. The overall quality of teaching and the curriculum is weaker in Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across the school although their progress in some lessons is unsatisfactory. The comparison of the 1999 average points score with that of boys and girls in similar schools indicate standards which are below average. Inspection evidence shows the most able boys do not achieve sufficiently in some subjects. Similarly the middle ability pupils aiming for 5 or more passes at GCSE are not achieving their potential in all subjects. A key factor in this is the limited use of assessment information to promote progress and inform teaching. The school does not have systems to track the progress of individual or groups of pupils sufficiently well. This prevents early intervention and support for pupils being available across all subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

12. These are significant strengths which, together with high levels of attendance, make a very positive contribution to pupils' progress and standards of attainment.
13. In all year groups the vast majority of pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They like coming to school and show a very good level of interest in their work. Their response in lessons is often good or very good. Pupils settle down quickly and concentrate well, particularly when teaching is stimulating

and tasks are challenging. They enjoy asking and answering questions. Attitudes are rarely unsatisfactory and enhance the quality of learning and progress across the school. Good attitudes are a consistent feature even in the minority of lessons which are slow in pace and undemanding.

14. Pupils have pride in the school, and show a high degree of loyalty to it. They value its reputation and are eager for school teams to do well in competitions. They appreciate the extra-curricular activities and additional classes that the school provides and have a good level of involvement in them. Most pupils also work hard at home and strive to complete their homework to good standard.
15. Standards of behaviour both in and out of lesson are very good, with no significant differences between pupils of different age or attainment. This aspect of the school is greatly valued by parents and pupils alike. The school is an orderly community in which pupils respect the code of conduct and good learning can take place. This is reflected in the low incidence of permanent exclusions. Pupils are courteous and most respect the school and one another's property. However there are a few examples of graffiti in diaries, and the practice of dropping of litter is widespread. Oppressive behaviour, such as bullying, does occur but is not a feature of life in the school and acts of physical violence are very rare. When bullying does happen, it usually takes the form of verbal teasing. There are also scattered examples of sexist attitudes, for instance in comments in pupils' diaries, and the odd remark in class which reveals unthinking racism.
16. The quality of relationships within the school is very good. Pupils are open and friendly and in lessons show a high degree of trust in, and respect for, their teachers. They respond well to teachers' expectations, and work well with one another in pairs or groups when required to do so. Generally they respect the feelings, beliefs and values of other people, as class discussions of sensitive topics show. Most pupils understand the impact of their actions on others, but do not always apply their understanding in practice. For example, there are times when they fail to listen with due care to each other's contributions in class. Some pupils are also unaware of the hurt that verbal teasing can cause.
17. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development during their time in school. They increasingly show the ability to think and work independently, and to take responsibility for scheduling their homework and organising their own learning. Out of class they respond very positively to opportunities to exercise initiative and take on responsibilities. They value the chance to take part in the running of the school. For example, the positions of Head Boy, Deputy Heads and Senior Prefects are eagerly sought after. Pupils also take part in extra-curricular activities which require initiative and considerable organisational skills. Currently they are successfully writing, publishing and distributing regular editions of the Winnersh local newspaper.
18. Levels of attendance in 1998/99 were broadly in line with the national average (91.5%) and were lower than the previous year. However in the first two terms of 1999/00 they have improved and are above the 90% benchmark in all year groups except Year 11, where the rate is 89.71%. Registers show poor figures for attendance in Year 13. However sixth form lessons were well attended during the week of inspection, and it was apparent that many students were not attending registration sessions. The overall rate of unauthorised absence is low. Punctuality for registrations and lessons is generally good, but at the start of the day is dependent on punctuality of buses and trains.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching across the school is good. It is good at Key Stage 3 and 4 and very good in the Sixth Form. However, there are a small but significant number of lessons where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory or poor. Over half the lessons seen were judged to be good or very good teaching which is similar to the previous inspection. 8 per cent of lessons, sixteen in all, were unsatisfactory or poor.
20. Teaching is consistently good in English, history, and geography. In these subjects teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise. For example, in English where 25% of lessons are very good or better, very good subject knowledge allows teachers to select texts and plan activities which are well matched to the needs of different groups of boys and provide a good level of challenge. A particular strength of teaching in geography is the very detailed marking of work which enables pupils to be very clear about the standard they have reached and what they have to do to improve. They are required to analyse their own performance and to use this analysis to set their own targets. In history where all the teaching seen is good, pupils are given time to reflect on their learning and to talk about their work and ideas which helps to refine ideas and encourages the development of speaking skills.

21. Teaching is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages. Some of the unsatisfactory teaching in subjects is related to non-specialist teachers who are part-time or on supply to cover staff absence. The majority of weaker teaching is seen in lessons in Key Stage 3 except in science, modern languages and religious education where it is seen in Key Stage 4. A particular feature of weaker teaching is the limited range of strategies employed to stimulate interest and learning. For example, in language lessons teachers do not make use of imaginative activities such as role plays, group work, discussion, mime or drama. Some lessons are not planned sufficiently well and the learning objectives and intended outcomes of the lesson are not explicit. In these lessons time is not well managed and the pace of learning is slow. This was seen in art, science and some mathematics lessons.
22. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is mainly good. Occasionally it is poor. It is good in the main school when it is matched to the abilities and requirements of the pupils. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is targeted appropriately in some subjects. In art lessons teachers encourage pupils to take pride in their kite designs and ceramic sculptures. Pupils are expected to begin to develop critical awareness by assessing their work against that of others. In English the teaching of language skills and of the awareness of the context to written and visual texts is excellent. Where teaching is well-planned and targeted to pupils' specific needs it is successful. Where planning is poor, resources unavailable and management of behaviour is poor then the teaching is unsuccessful.
23. In Key Stage 4 pupils with special educational needs follow appropriate courses and in most lessons the quality of teaching is good. In some subjects such as science, mathematics and information technology, higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently well challenged, while in art teachers frequently present additional challenge by careful questioning and demonstration of new techniques. In history the strategies used to teach the middle ability groups are too limited and place comparatively greater pressure on some of the lower attaining pupils.
24. A strength of all teaching and learning is the very positive attitudes of the pupils and the very good behaviour in lessons. Teachers regularly encourage and promote a positive learning ethos. There is a strong work ethic engendered in the school and this has a significant impact on the rate of learning. This results in boys showing very good concentration and interest in lessons, a good degree of independent work when provided with the opportunities, and very good intellectual, physical and creative effort. This is a particular feature of the good rate of progress observed in physical education.

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

25. The school has made unsatisfactory response to issues raised by the previous inspection in 1995. Opportunities for the spiritual dimension in pupils' education have been improved, notably through provision in assemblies. National Curriculum shortcomings have been successfully tackled in physical education, and all sixth form students now include a six week module in religious education as part of their programmes. Some progress has been made in improving the development of pupils' independent learning skills, mainly in geography and history, but overall this has been insufficient. The time allocated for religious education remains an area for development.
26. Currently, the curriculum arrangements in the school are unsatisfactory. They are not meeting the statutory requirements for religious education across the school, information technology in both keystages 3 and 4, and design and technology in Key Stage 4. National Curriculum requirements for modern foreign languages are not fully met. The information technology component of the requirements for art and music are not met. Therefore, both the quality and range of the curriculum at both Key Stage 3 and 4 are unsatisfactory. It is good in the sixth form.
27. In other respects the school is providing a curriculum that is appropriate for the learning needs of its pupils at each key stage. The curriculum is managed by a governors' committee and key senior staff, and the school has adopted the local authority curriculum policy to guide its provision. Curriculum issues are discussed by governors. For example, the implications of a recent curriculum review aimed at reducing class sizes has been a main agenda item in recent meetings. Arrangements are well advanced for sixth form curriculum and course organisation following the introduction of revised accreditation from September 2000. Some required policies are in place, including a whole-school policy for literacy, although not for numeracy. The literacy policy is good and is effective in some subjects. A significant weakness is the absence of a curriculum policy specifically written for the school, with clear statements relating to its values and principles. For example, statements published in the school prospectus are not reflected in the actual curriculum arrangements and some decisions relating to statutory requirements are not fully understood by governors. The lack of a clear curriculum

policy restricts governors from accurately appraising the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum provision.

28. At Key Stage 3, pupils cover the full range of National Curriculum subjects, religious education, drama, and personal and social education. Some, but not all, are given the opportunity to study a second foreign language from Year 8 onwards. Arrangements for information technology and religious education are unsatisfactory at this keystage, because insufficient time is allocated to ensure the required breadth and depth of experience. In design and technology some more able pupils are not covering the full requirements at this stage. In other respects, the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is appropriately broad and balanced. The banding arrangements are generally acceptable for most pupils, but not always for those pupils with special educational needs, particularly when teaching is unsatisfactory. The timetable allows subjects to be taught in either single 35 minute lessons or 70 minute blocks, and this arrangement is effective. However, the overall time allocation is below the minimum level recommended nationally and this is impacting significantly on areas such as religious education and information technology.
29. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements. Not all pupils take design and technology or a modern foreign language. All pupils study GCSE courses in English, mathematics, science, plus core courses in physical education, and personal and social education. Three further GCSE choices are made from the remaining National Curriculum subjects together with a good range of vocationally orientated GCSE subjects, including drama, media studies, electronics, and auto engineering. Overall, this provides good breadth of opportunity. However, insufficient time is given to religious education to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, or to provide a coherent course. The general lack of commitment to the subject across the school results in poor take up of religious education as an examination subject. The number of pupils opting to take German, the second modern foreign language, is also very low. Information technology provision is good for those taking the discrete examination course, but statutory requirements are not met for all pupils in Key Stage 4, because it is not taught effectively within other subjects. Health education, including sex education and drugs awareness is taught appropriately within the personal development programme, and work experience takes place in Year 11.
30. The quality and range of sixth form provision is good. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum at this level, offering students a choice from 21 GCE Advanced or Advanced Supplementary courses and an appropriate range of 'enhancement' opportunities. In addition to the required personal and social education students may choose from a good range of complimentary studies including; physical education; computer and information technology; European studies; home economics and foreign languages. The school's decision not to offer vocational courses accurately reflects the needs and aspirations of the majority of Key Stage Four pupils who may opt for such courses at other local institutions. The omission of religious education from the curriculum, noted in the last report, has now been addressed and all Year 12 and 13 students take a six week module in the subject. Whilst this latter course is an improvement from the previous inspection, it is too short to ensure that statutory requirements are met. Students place a high value on the careers guidance and advice on further and higher educational opportunities. This is made available through scheduled group sessions and individual tutorials led by school based and external agencies. They similarly have high regard for, and take advantage of, the extensive range of cultural, social and sporting opportunities available. The cost-effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. A small proportion of the cost is subsidised by fewer resources being available lower down the school. The result of this is seen particularly in some large teaching groups in Key Stage Four.
31. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the opportunities offered by the curriculum. Pupils in Year 9 make appropriate choices in their options. There is a range of more practical courses in Key Stage 4 to which pupils have access and which give them opportunities to succeed. The opportunities in design and technology are particularly good. The management of special educational needs is unsatisfactory. The Special Needs Co-ordinator has recently been appointed and has introduced some positive developments in supporting reading and spelling. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the issues for development in special needs. However, policy for special educational needs does not ensure a positive approach to this provision by all staff. It does not stress social inclusion. The governors do not have effective means to monitor and evaluate the provision and do not receive sufficient information to allow them to achieve this. The strategic management view of how special educational needs fits into the whole curriculum is under-developed. The procedures for identifying pupils for the register of special educational needs are also under-developed, as is the

matching of provision to need. Distinction is not made clearly between pupils with behavioural problems and those with language difficulties. The allocation of time for the co-ordinator to manage the provision is insufficient. The individual education plans, which drive the provision for these pupils, are weak. These plans do not specify the entitlement for those pupils with statements of special needs and so the monitoring of this extra funding provision is inadequate.

32. The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for equality of opportunity. Pupils and sixth form students have equal access to most subjects of the curriculum. There is unequal access to modern foreign languages in Year 8, where only the most able linguists get the chance to study German. At sixth form level, some departments require students to achieve at least a grade B in their subject, while others will accept a grade C. In some subjects such as science, design and technology at Key Stage 3 and information technology teaching and curriculum planning does not take sufficient account of the needs of the most able pupils.
33. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum of personal and social education in all year groups. The discrete programme focuses on life and learning skills, self assessment, and careers education, but units of study in religious education and science ensure that health and sex education are adequately covered. Extra-curricular activities, such as the publication of the local newspaper, also make a positive contribution. The programme of personal and social education is effectively co-ordinated and makes satisfactory provision for continuity and progression. The quality and organisation of the careers component is good. The curriculum of careers education and guidance is enhanced by good arrangements for work experience and close co-operation between the school and staff of the local careers service. The teaching of personal and social education is sound, but the timetable provides only a very limited amount of time for discrete lessons in the subject.
34. The school has strong local and overseas links which enrich its curriculum and enhance its provision for pupils' personal development. Contacts with local employers contribute positively to arrangements for work experience and careers guidance. For example, pupils in Year 11 get the benefit of mock interviews with employers. There is constructive liaison with the local parish over the "Around Winnersh" community newsletter, which pupils in the school produce in co-operation with girls from Holt School. Links with schools in Europe and further afield provide pupils with many opportunities to engage in correspondence, and to take part in visits, such as the business studies students' annual trip to the city of Prague. At the time of the inspection a group of Year 12 students was preparing to go on an exchange visit to Sienna, during which they would take part in an international arts festival.
35. The quality of the school's links with partner organisations is uneven, but satisfactory overall. Links with feeder schools are adequate in respect of the induction of pupils into secondary education. There are satisfactory arrangements for staff visits and the exchange of information on pupils. However, cross phase liaison on the curriculum is weak, with few contacts between members of departments and the equivalent subject co-ordinators in primary schools. Forest School has some beneficial contacts with other Wokingham schools. For example, the school leads the co-ordinated programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers in the Wokingham area. Links with the University of Reading are strong in respect of initial teacher training and media studies. This was evident during the week of inspection when a number of media studies students in Year 11 were able to use the university's recording studio to enhance their video. Good co-operation with the university gave these pupils access to editing facilities which were not available in school.
36. The school's extra-curricular provision is good and greatly valued by the majority of pupils. There are many opportunities and they are well supported. For example, provision for sport is very good, with more than half the school regularly involved. The re-award of Sportsmark Gold is testimony to the quality and range of opportunity. Drama and music are also strengths, and most subjects have flourishing extra-curricular activities which support pupils' learning and provide for their interests and enthusiasm. There is a full and varied programme of school visits: these include field study visits, foreign language exchanges, and cultural visits in this country and overseas. The inspection does not support the concerns of a small number of parents who feel that the range of activities is too narrow.

PUPILS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

37. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school successfully achieves its aims to foster respect and tolerance. Adults in the school set a good example

through their work and show a strong concern for their pupils, which encourages a mutual respect. Similar standards of provision were reported at the previous inspection. The overall contribution of religious education has improved as the subject has been developed further. The weakest area remains the provision for pupils' spiritual development which was a key issue in the last report.

38. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' spiritual development, the major contribution coming from regular acts of collective worship and from religious education lessons. Some other classes also contribute to pupils' spiritual development. A good example was seen in a Year 9 music lesson when pupils were performing their own songs about issues that strongly concerned them and for which they had composed the lyrics and music. These gave a very powerful message to their classmates. However, opportunities for spiritual development are not embedded across the curriculum and there is no overall school policy. Assemblies are of good quality and promote good opportunities for reflection. While the assemblies make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development they do not, however, regularly provide a sufficient element of worship to meet statutory requirements. This is a similar position to the last inspection.
39. The attention given to developing the pupils' moral awareness is very good. From the most senior level, the school successfully provides and maintains a caring environment. There is a clear code of conduct for regulating personal and social behaviour, which encourages pupils to do the right thing. Staff lead by example and teach the principles which distinguish right from wrong. Lessons in tutor groups for personal, health and social education provide effective support for promoting moral awareness. When appropriate, moral values are reinforced throughout the curriculum; for example, pupils in geography discuss population growth, they consider issues about the rain forests and other environmental concerns. The school has a strong sports ethos and pupils are consistently taught to play to the rules.
40. The provision for pupils' social development is good. Positive relationships are encouraged in many activities such as music and drama, when pupils work in groups and support each other at a personal level. Numerous opportunities also occur in the good programme of extra-curricular activities and residential experiences. In Year 9, for example, pupils will be involved in up to six school trips during the year, including an opportunity for a residential trip. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities in the life of the school and beyond. Pupils are encouraged, for example, to work for charities and to raise money through activities such as sponsored football and car washing. Boys have responsibilities in the house system or as sports captains. Older pupils serve the school community as prefects, and provide support for younger pupils in mathematics, in drama and for pupils with special educational needs.
41. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Most subjects provide opportunities for pupils to extend awareness of their own and other cultures. In religious education, although time allocated for the subject is short, pupils study a variety of ethical issues from the perspectives of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. The school has formed links for pupils with schools in Africa, Denmark, Italy and Hungary, amongst others. Opportunities for pupils' cultural enrichment are provided through the arts in the curriculum. These are enhanced by visits to museums and theatres. Artists and poets in residence come to work with pupils in the school each year. Opportunities for pupils to become familiar with features of other cultures are satisfactory in art and in music, but some opportunities are missed in English and are unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages. Whilst there are some opportunities in the curriculum to study Britain's multicultural heritage, these are not always well developed. Similarly, opportunities are also missed for the boys to develop cultural and social awareness about issues of gender.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. There is very good provision for monitoring pupils' personal development. The pastoral structure provides effective systems through which tutors and heads of year track pupils' overall progress. This includes their effort and attainment in academic subjects. The pastoral system also gives pupils guidance on personal problems. Educational support is satisfactory overall but is less well developed. There are some good procedures for self-assessment and target setting but pupils are not sufficiently informed and guided towards achieving their targets. The quality of general support and guidance for pupils via personal and social education is satisfactory. The programme is adequate, covering careers, sex education, and life styles, and is soundly taught. Pupils also learn about the world of work

though a good programme of work experience in Year 11, and school leavers are satisfactorily informed about the next stage of their education through the school's links with colleges and universities.

43. There is an effective pastoral structure organised on the basis of form tutors and heads of year who stay with the same groups of pupils, starting with induction visits in Year 6 and continuing until the end of Year 11. As a result pastoral staff get to know boys and their families very well and are well placed to give them appropriate personal support and guidance. Very positive relations between pupils and teachers enhance the quality of pastoral care by encouraging boys to be open and share their problems. Staff nearly always deal with these quickly and effectively. When necessary the school will call in outside specialist advisory services although the support from these is not always prompt or fully effective.
44. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. The school has adopted the local education authority's policy and has appointed a suitably trained and experienced person as child protection officer. Members of staff are well briefed on the issue and are duly aware of the school's procedures.
45. The school makes satisfactory provision for the health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors. In accordance with the local authority's policy, it has introduced a new approach, based on risk assessment. It has drafted a new health and safety policy, trained staff in risk assessment and drawn up a rolling programme for the whole school. These measures, including the governing body's approval of the new policy, have not yet been implemented, but interim arrangements are adequate. High risk departments have carried out assessments and the school has good procedures for dealing with trips and residential visits. Provision for first aid is satisfactory and statutory checks of equipment have been carried out. Evacuation procedures ensure that the buildings can be cleared quickly, but as many students in Year 13 do not attend registration, the school cannot be certain of precisely who is on site, and therefore cannot account for everyone in the event of an emergency.
46. There are good procedures for recording and monitoring the attendance of pupils of statutory school age. Registrations comply with legal requirements, and the school makes good use of its computerised system to provide form tutors and heads of year with accurate attendance statistics. There are effective checks on patterns of absence, and pastoral staff follow up all unexplained absences promptly. There is good liaison with the education welfare officer who plays a valuable part in the school's work to improve attendance. The weakness of the school's provision is the lack of systematic checks on pupils' attendance in class. During the inspection only a minority of teachers were observed to hold roll calls at the beginning of lessons. The school has no way of knowing if pupils are attending all lessons.
47. Promotion of good behaviour and discipline are priorities for the school, and are inherent in its policies and procedures. These are very successful, as shown by the high standards which pupils attain. Expectations are high and are clearly and effectively communicated throughout the school. For example, pupils and students have a good understanding of the school's code of conduct, "Respect for All". Behaviour is monitored very thoroughly through the pastoral system, where form tutors and heads of year keep comprehensive records of the "commendations" and "discredits" earned by pupils. The system of sanctions and rewards works well, with the school making good use of inter-house and tutor group competitions to promote positive conduct. There is a good degree of consistency in the application of discipline across the school, and as a result the majority of pupils accept the system as reasonable and fair. There is a successful policy of inclusion. Exclusion is only used as a last resort, and permanent exclusion from school is uncommon.
48. The school has good procedures to eliminate oppressive behaviour. The aims and ethos of school and its code of conduct combine to create a climate which is hostile to bullying and physical aggression. Useful preventative and fact finding work is carried out in personal and social education lessons. This has included a survey of Year 7 pupils on the issue of bullying. Practical measures are effective, as in the case of lunchtime supervision where the number of staff and prefects on duty helps to avert problems. Particular instances of sexist behaviour are mostly dealt with effectively, but the school lacks an overall strategy for changing sexist attitudes.
49. There are good procedures in place to assess pupils' attainment on entry and these are used with information from primary feeder schools to place pupils in teaching sets. Departments all have individual assessment policies. This leads to a range of practice across subjects, but in general, pupils learn to understand the variety of methods in use. Parents are not so clear in their understanding. The

school provides parents with a full report on pupils once each year and this is supplemented by an interim report also. There are also parents' evenings where pupils' attainment and progress can be discussed with teachers. School reports provide adequate information on pupils' attitudes and progress, but do not provide sufficient information concerning pupils' National Curriculum levels or what they may do to improve their performance. The inspection findings support the concerns of parents about the unsatisfactory quality of information about pupils' progress and the links between the school and parents.

50. The use of individual education plans to assess the learning of pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory. The plans do not record pupil's strengths; the targets are not measurable in the short term. Individual pupils cannot track their progress against these plans. The plans are not detailed and specific enough to provide information for curricular planning. Parents are invited to annual reviews of pupils with special educational needs, where individual education plans are reviewed. However parents do not sign the individual plans to specify their agreement and this devalues those plans.
51. The use of assessment data varies from subject to subject but is overall unsatisfactory. There is good practice, for example, in English and geography where data is used to plan the curriculum, set department and individual targets and to discuss pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses with them. In other departments, such as modern languages there is a lot of information gathered but its use, for evaluation and checking GCSE results for instance, is inconsistent. Form tutors have the main role in planning targets for pupils and these are recorded in pupils' diaries. In general this works well and both tutors and pupils are well informed. The school does not have a clear overall assessment policy or marking policy and assessment data is not well analysed and used to determine school performance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. Parents are very supportive of the school and make a positive contribution whenever opportunities arise. There are few opportunities for them to express their views and there is insufficient opportunity for them to be fully involved with the progress of the boys.
53. A large number of parents responded to the survey of parental opinion prior to the inspection. The majority of replies express approval of and support for the school. A high percentage say that pupils like school, are making good progress, and behave well although a small but significant number disagree. Most also think that their sons are well taught, expected to work hard and helped to become mature and responsible. However, a significant minority believe that parents are not well informed about pupils' progress and that the school does not work closely with them. The proportion of parents with these concerns is more than usual in a school of this type. Some parents are also unhappy with the varying amount of homework that their sons are given to do at home. The inspection confirms some parents' views including the dissatisfaction regarding the amount and quality of information on pupils' progress and the links with parents. It also identifies a small minority of pupils who are under achieving. However the inspection does not agree with the concerns about homework and the range of extra-curricular activities, and finds some significant weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school.
54. Information for parents has some positive features but is overall unsatisfactory. There is a good booklet on the curriculum at Key Stage 4 which helps parents of pupils in Year 9 to understand the various GCSE courses offered by the school. The school also makes good provision for briefing parents on how they can help their sons with GCSE work. The sixth form prospectus is informative on the courses that are available after year 11. There is an effective line of day-to-day communication between home and school in the form of pupils' diaries. In most cases these are conscientiously filled in by pupils, monitored by teachers, and signed by parents. They are a source of information on pupils' work, achievements and targets for improvement, although there is lack of detail on pupils' progress towards targets. However these strengths are outweighed by weaknesses. The quality of the school prospectus is poor, particularly in regard to information on the curriculum. The section on sex education does not advise parents of their right to withdraw their children from lessons that are not part of the statutory requirement in science. The prospectus therefore fails to meet legal requirements. This is also the case with the annual report of the governing body, which does not give an adequate assessment of the success of the school's policy for pupils with special educational needs.
55. Arrangements for reporting to parents on pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. The annual written reports do not include national curriculum levels or say what pupils need to do to improve their

attainment. The omission of national curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 is a breach of legal requirements. Although parents feel comfortable about approaching members of staff over problems, and have no difficulty in seeing them on an informal basis, their overall entitlement to access and dialogue with the school is unsatisfactory. The school provides one formal consultation evening per year, and parents are sometimes limited to seeing four teachers during the course of it. As result, parents have few formal opportunities to discuss pupils' progress in most subjects of the curriculum. This is a source of justified complaint among a significant number of those who completed the inspection questionnaire.

56. In other respects the school has fostered satisfactory links with parents. The mathematics department has made good arrangement to explain its numeracy policy to parents of pupils in Year 7 to 9, and has encouraged them to help their sons with mathematics homework. The school has actively recruited fathers to help boys with reading, with positive effects on standards of literacy. All parents have been consulted on the content of the recently introduced home/school contract, and the majority have signed them. This level of consultation and involvement is more than usually seen in schools. However the school does not have a clear policy for how it works with parents and these very good examples are not planned consistently across all subjects.
57. Parents are keenly interested in their sons' progress. They are ambitious for them and want them to achieve well academically. This is manifest in very high levels of attendance at consultation evenings, and school plays and concerts. Parents are actively supportive, making financial contributions to extra-curricular activities and school trips. The parent teacher association is well established and successful, raising large sums of money each year to fund extra learning resources. The majority of parents also provide pupils with a home environment which promotes learning, and many pupils have access to facilities for information technology out of school. Overall, the quality of parents' involvement in pupils' education is good and makes a significant contribution to their progress and standards of attainment.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. Leadership and management of the school is satisfactory overall with some significant areas of weakness. The governors and senior management team have very successfully created an ethos over many years which undoubtedly supports high standards. They have prioritised throughout the school community high expectations of good behaviour and examination success. The headmaster has been in post for nineteen years and provides a very clear vision of how he expects boys to respond to their teachers, to work hard, to respect the school code and to enjoy their time in Forest School. This vision is greatly appreciated by parents and valued by governors. However, in maintaining such a strong focus the headmaster and senior team have paid insufficient attention to the need for the highest quality teaching in all areas and a balanced and effective curriculum. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and taking effective action is unsatisfactory. The effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its responsibilities and shaping the direction of the school is unsatisfactory and improvement since the last inspection is also unsatisfactory.
59. The governing body has an appropriate structure with sub groups assigned to specific areas of school development. These groups meet regularly and records are kept which indicate a satisfactory range of topics covered. There is a good balance of expertise and experience and the majority of governors have a very keen interest in the school. Many are parents of boys in the school. Interviews with governors indicate that they have some understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and most are well informed about decisions related to school buildings. They are less secure on curriculum issues and are not fully aware of their statutory responsibilities. There is an over-reliance on the information supplied by the headmaster and senior staff and governors play little part in the monitoring and evaluation of school performance. This means that they are unable to shape the direction of school development and cannot support educational priorities with sound financial planning.
60. The senior management team has been extended in recent years to include a female senior teacher who is also leading the English department. Prior to this appointment the headmaster and the two deputy headmasters had worked together for ten years. During this time their roles and responsibilities have not been well defined although the informal approach of the team has resulted in a strong ethos within the school. There is a lack of clarity in the job descriptions of all members of the newly formed

senior team. This is restricting the opportunities for monitoring and effectiveness of actions for improvement.

61. The quality of the leadership and management of subjects and other areas of the school varies from very good to unsatisfactory. There are several departments which have shown good improvement since the last inspection. These include geography, history and physical education. Geography and physical education also contribute significantly to the standards achieved by boys in the school. There are also strengths in the organisation of the pastoral areas of the school. However there are unacceptable proportions of unsatisfactory management. These are found in modern languages, special educational needs, information technology and in some aspects of the long term vision for art, music, religious education, and history. In several areas there has been unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection including in modern languages, religious education, information technology and special educational needs. Development planning across the school is weak and the School Improvement Programme lacks rigour and is not built on sound evaluation of strengths and weaknesses.
62. The progress made by the school towards targets identified after the last inspection is unsatisfactory overall. The standards and the quality of teaching have generally been maintained but there is now a higher proportion of lessons where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Standards in Key Stage 3 match the national trend but are slightly below the national trend at the end of Key Stage 4. There has been good progress in the development of pupils' independent learning skills in some subjects such as history, geography and English. However, the provision in information technology and the focus on this aspect of teaching in many subjects has been unsatisfactory. There is limited monitoring of classroom teaching to inform the senior team on progress in this area. There has been minimal progress in the requirement for the senior team and governors to ensure that all managers implement and monitor policies consistently. The senior team do not fully understand performance management and do not identify appropriate targets and review progress towards them. Although the contribution of religious education to the development of the spiritual dimension in the boys' education has been improved, this area is no better than it was previously. The need to raise the self-esteem of pupils with special educational needs has been given some attention with the appointment of a new special needs coordinator but there are still weaknesses in the overall management of this area.
63. The overall funding for the school is higher than the national average. It receives additional grants to support pupils with special educational needs. It also receives funding to support staff training including an allocation to train staff in the teaching of information technology from the New Opportunities Fund. Specific grants are used appropriately for their intended purpose but their impact on pupils and teaching is not effectively monitored. The school is also fortunate in receiving considerable funding from the Parent Teacher Association. The Forest Development Fund provides significant financial support used at the governors' discretion to provide facilities such as a fitness room and swimming pool cover. The school has recently improved its science accommodation which it provided from within its own resources, despite experiencing delays and a severe increase in building costs during the process. The senior management team, in consultation with governors and heads of department are actively engaged in short and long-term planning for maintenance, replacement and extension of the current ageing building stock
64. The school's resource allocation is about average for schools nationally. Capitation funds are allocated to departments using a formula which is in-part historical but also combines a bidding system linked to the School Improvement Plan. The process is subject to annual review. Funds are sufficient to meet the needs of departments and are used effectively for the purchase of resources to support teaching and learning. The School Improvement Plan contains an appropriate range of global targets. Departmental action plans frequently do not contain success criteria that are measurable and linked to raising standards or improving the quality of pupil's experiences. Subsequently, there are limited indications of how the cost-effectiveness of spending decisions are monitored.
65. The finance sub-committee of the governing body maintains a clear overview of financial planning and budget maintenance. They trust the senior management team to make effective decisions about the way resources are allocated to improve teaching, learning and the curriculum.
66. Routine administration of the school's budget is very efficient. New technologies enable the school to monitor carefully its budget against expenditure. Managers of cost-centres are kept fully informed

about the state of their accounts. The recommendations of the auditors have been fully implemented and there are very good procedures for ensuring 'best value' at the school. Well defined procedures exist for obtaining quotes and tenders before placing orders. The services of successful contractors are monitored carefully to ensure compliance to high standards and appropriate action is taken if they are not met.

67. The last report indicated that formal mechanisms to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of spending decisions were not in place. This remains the major issue. The cost-effectiveness of spending decisions is not made against clear success criteria. Decisions are not linked rigorously to the development of educational priorities which consider the standards of pupils' learning and the quality of their experiences. Overall the school currently gives satisfactory value for money when factors such as the higher than average income, the above average standards and the characteristics of the school are considered.
68. The school has sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff. The experience and qualifications of teachers are appropriately matched to the subjects they teach in all areas except religious education where there are number of non-specialists contributing to the programme. There is sufficient classroom support for those students with special educational needs and there is a good range of non-teaching staff who effectively support teachers in all aspects of their work.
69. There is a very good induction system in place for newly qualified and recently appointed experienced teachers. The regular programme of meetings and staff development is well supported and effectively monitored with staff mentors providing additional professional guidance. Staff development opportunities are linked to whole school plans and a programme of visiting presenters is complemented by arrangements with a group of similar schools, through a series of joint development and training initiatives. Appraisal is not currently in place and there is no whole school programme of formalised monitoring to support and develop teachers' practice. Departments review their development needs and identify staff for further professional development to assist with the implementation of initiatives. This system is not effective. The inspection identifies a significant number of lessons where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. The senior team are not sufficiently aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and are unable to plan effective staff development.
70. Resources to support the delivery of the National Curriculum are unsatisfactory overall because of weaknesses in the provision for information technology. In many curriculum areas they are inadequate to support teaching and learning. Since the last inspection the number of computers available for use has remained the same although the number considered to offer appropriate quality has fallen substantially and is now well below the national average. This is restricting the access of many subject areas to information technology facilities and has a negative impact on learning. The provision of textbooks is generally adequate or good across the school with the current exception of design and technology and mathematics, although both departments are in the process of upgrading their stock.
71. The library and sixth form library accommodation is small for the size of the school but makes an important contribution to the standard of student learning. The book stock is of a good quality with a ratio of books to pupils in line with the national recommended level. There are adequate fiction and reference sections and a good collection of subscribed papers and magazines with a large donated collection to support pupils' interests. Learning resource facilities in the main library are good with a cluster of PC's with CD ROM's and Internet access provided to support independent research. The library is very well managed and supports subjects in the selection of resources and makes good use of extended loans from the local library service.
72. The accommodation adequately supports the majority of specialist activities. Since the last inspection much has been done to address the need for a specialist room for science and modern foreign languages. A modification to the existing buildings has created a new two-storey building to resolve these problems with the creation of a sixth form science laboratory and additional modern languages room. The school has a development plan to address curriculum needs and continues to make the best use of the accommodation available. For example, modifying home economics and upgrading specialist accommodation, including information technology facilities in geography. In collaboration with the local education authority it is planning to pilot the practice of Joint Asset Management to enable the school to plan more long-term. This should also enable the school to resolve outstanding problems with flat roofs and complete the physical education changing rooms and showers modifications.

73. The buildings are generally well-maintained as part of an on-going programme of improvement reviewed every six months and carried out by the maintenance manager. The school effectively manages its own cleaning contract. Good quality display in classrooms and corridors provides stimulus and celebrates the achievements of pupils. Many specialist rooms, such as those for English, geography and art, provide good space to enable appropriate learning activities to take place. The gymnasium, sports hall, weight training room and swimming pool, along with extensive playing fields also provide good opportunities for physical education.
74. However there are some concerns in science about some laboratories and access to information technology. The space for religious education is adequate but is not made available for staff use. There are insufficient specialist rooms to support the number of non-specialists timetabled around the school. Access to the specialist resources for religious education is difficult in these circumstances and does impact on standards.
75. The senior management team and governors maintain a long-term vision for the accommodation and are extremely proactive in investigating opportunities for funding and the continued development of the school buildings.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors and senior managers should note the following key issues for action when drawing up their action plan following the inspection. The numbers in brackets refer to the relevant paragraphs of the report.

Make improvements in the leadership and management of the school by;

- Developing robust and rigorous systems to monitor the quality of the curriculum and teaching at all levels of the school, and to analyse the work of the school, in a manner that:
 1. provides continuity of contact between senior and middle managers;
 2. ensures that middle managers are accountable for improvements in their areas;

Paragraphs: 26, 2, 3, 60, 61, 62, 64.

- Improving the use that is made of assessment information throughout the school to guide the learning process, paying particular attention to:
 1. improving the rigour of analyses, and use, of data to identify possible areas of strength and weakness at whole-school, subject and classroom levels;
 2. setting clear targets for all pupils based upon these analyses, and sharing them with pupils and their parents;
 3. monitoring regularly and frequently the systems put in place to ensure that they are followed by all staff as intended.
 4. reporting to parents regularly and at times which are convenient to both the school and the parents.

Paragraphs: 49, 50, 51, 55, 56.

- Improving the link between whole-school and departmental development plans with particular reference to:
 1. ensuring that departmental plans show clearly how whole-school planning priorities will be delivered, as well as identifying department-specific priorities;
 2. ensuring that the whole-school and departmental plans contain clear indications of targets, timescales, responsibilities, success criteria, costs and staff development needs, and that these are quantified wherever possible;

3. ensuring that the implementation of whole-school planning targets is monitored frequently and regularly by governors and senior managers, and that of departmental planning targets is monitored in the same manner by senior and middle managers.

Paragraphs: 58, 59, 61, 62.

- Making governors fully aware of their responsibilities and providing them with the means to adequately fulfill their duties including all statutory requirements.

Paragraphs: 59, 25, 26, 27.

In addition the governors should pay attention to the raising of standards and teaching in modern foreign languages; the quality of provision in information technology; the strategic vision for pupils with special educational needs; the quality of information and links with parents and to the quality of financial planning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	185
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	14	46	30	7	1	0

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

SCHOOL DATA TO BE ADDED FROM S1

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	983	189
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	25	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	177	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	31

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	91.5
National comparative data	91.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year 1999	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	200	200	0	200

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	133	168	155
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	133	168	155
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (86)	84 (86)	78 (86)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (62)	68 (69)	40 (51)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	160	169	147
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	160	169	147
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (71)	85 (86)	74 (86)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (27)	73 (63)	41 (54)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	193	0	193

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	138	184	185
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	138	184	185
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	72 (67.7)	95 (97.4)	96 (98)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44 (44.6)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	146	0	146

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	18	0	18 (15.9)	5.7	0	5.7 (5.1)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.3)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	4
Indian	18
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	5
White	1088
Any other minority ethnic group	48

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	16	-
Other minority ethnic groups	-	-

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	67.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	392

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	23.7
Key Stage 4	21.6

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2650062
Total expenditure	2580728
Expenditure per pupil	2175
Balance brought forward from previous year	34585
Balance carried forward to next year	103919

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1172

Number of questionnaires returned

304

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	55	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	54	5	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	63	5	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	61	17	3	0
The teaching is good.	33	58	3	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	48	20	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	44	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	41	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	48	19	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	53	43	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	51	5	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	51	12	2	9

SUMMARY OF PARENTS' AND CARERS' RESPONSES

There was a good response to the questionnaire with the majority of parents very supportive of the leadership and management, the expectations that the school has for boys to work hard and to be responsible. A minority of parents report that their child does not like school, that they are not making progress and that the school does not provide an interesting range of extra-curricular activities. A greater proportion are unhappy about the amount of homework, the quality of information to parents and the links between the school and parents. This is more than usual in a school of this kind.

Some parents are also unhappy with the varying amount of homework that their sons are given to do at home. The inspection confirms some parents' views including the dissatisfaction regarding the amount and quality of information on pupils' progress and the links with parents. It also identifies a small minority of pupils who are under achieving. However the inspection does not agree with the concerns about homework and the range of extra-curricular activities, and finds some significant weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school.

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

76. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards achieved in the national tests are above average in 1999 and also for the previous three years. In comparison with boys nationally, standards are well above average. The school is justifiably proud of its success with boys' attainment in English, which is better than the national picture. In comparison with similar schools standards are well below average. This is because pupils' skills in literacy on entry to the school are lower than the expected when compared with similar schools, making comparisons unreliable. There is statistical evidence to show that pupils enter the school with average attainment in verbal and non verbal skills which is below the level of attainment in other key skills areas. Pupils develop their literacy skills well during Key Stage 3. Standards in English at the end of the key stage are below those of mathematics and science.
77. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards in GCSE Language and Literature grades A*-C are above average in 1999. This represents an upward trend over the last three years. However pupils' results in 1999 in grades A* – G are below the national average in English language and in line with the national average in English literature. The school has identified a small number of non-attending pupils whose absence from all or some of the examinations, has had an adverse effect on the school's results. When the average point scores achieved by pupils in English language and literature are compared with the school's average point scores, the figures show that the scores in language are below the school average and those in literature are above the school average.
78. Standards in GCE 'A' level examinations are well above average in 1999 in English literature and above average in English language. There has been a significant upward trend over the last three years in students' performance in English literature. 1999 was the first year for the school to enter candidates for the English language examination. Students' average score in both language and literature is significantly above students' average score in other subjects, although some of this comparative data may be unreliable due to some small group sizes in other subjects. Value added data, which analyses the school's total in relation to the national formula, indicates that both subjects added value significantly.
79. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are above the expected level for 14 year olds and well above the expected level of boys nationally. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 and at the end of the sixth form are also above expected levels with some examples, in English literature of standards well above expected levels. The achievement of the boys in Key Stage 3 is good. In Key Stage 4 the achievement of boys is satisfactory and in the sixth form students' achievement is good.
80. Standards of speaking and listening are above average throughout the school. Pupils speak confidently in class and most are able to develop their ideas in some depth and detail. Most listen productively to their teachers and to other pupils' contributions although some pupils' listening skills are more variable in Key Stage 4. In the sixth form students are able to analyse ideas and develop and extend each other's contributions. Skills in informal discussion are well developed as was seen in a Year 12 lesson where students were discussing 'The Great Gatsby'. They showed a good understanding of productive discussion which involved active listening, consideration of each other's ideas and sustaining their point of view. There were limited opportunities during the week of the inspection to observe more formal, extended debate and discussion although these are evident in schemes of work and teachers' planning.
81. Most pupils in Key Stage 3 are competent readers and have a good understanding of the texts used in the classroom. Some higher attaining pupils in Year 9 read aloud fluently and expressively in their study of Romeo and Juliet. The school's Literacy Strategy has had a positive effect on the standards in reading of lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 most pupils, including lower attaining pupils, have a secure knowledge of texts studied for GCSE examinations and are able to make relevant and often perceptive comments about their reading. However in both keystages pupils do not read a sufficiently wide range of text to enhance and support their reading experiences in the classroom. Sixth form students interact well with their texts. Older students have a secure grasp of some of the important conventions of the genre they are studying and are able to consider and analyse implications and inferences in language. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson where pupils were studying the Merchant of Venice as a tragi-comedy. They were able to refer to contrasting themes and show how they were woven through the structure of the play.

82. Standards in writing are generally above average throughout the school but in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 this aspect of English is the weakest. Higher attaining pupils write confidently and fluently with a good range of vocabulary in both key stages. They are able to adapt the tone of their writing to different formats and in Key Stage 4 they use analytical language and understand the appropriate conventions for referring to texts. In both key stages there is too great a variation in levels of accuracy and technical competency. This includes inaccuracies in punctuation, spelling and the development of sentence structure. In Key Stage 4 this weakness also includes the use of appropriate vocabulary for more formal writing and the coherence and linkage of ideas when presenting a point of view.
83. In the sixth form there is a very high standard of exposition and analysis in the very best writing. There is also a mature breadth of ideas and stylish expression. Most students are able to discuss a range of ideas in their textual analysis and there is often well developed consideration of different points of view. However some students' work contain technical inaccuracies and although these are often eliminated in drafting and proof reading it remains a weaker element in their writing.
84. Standards of information technology in English are generally in line with expectations. Pupils across the school have appropriate opportunities to develop word processing skills and lower attaining pupils have a sound understanding of how to correct spelling and punctuation errors in first drafts of their work. Some project work makes effective use of computer graphics and fonts and at the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have the opportunity to develop appropriate use of desk top publishing programmes. However limited access to facilities means that development of these skills is not always consistent.
85. Standards of oracy and literacy in the school are generally good and although there is some variation between subjects it is always satisfactory. Two years ago the school identified the need to improve pupils' access to reading across the whole curriculum. A literacy strategy was established which provided a very clear analysis of pupils' needs and a systematic programme of reading recovery which involved pupils, parents, older students in the school and teachers across a range of subjects. This effective strategy has been recognised by the local authority as a model of good practice and has resulted in identifiable progress in reading for the majority of pupils who took part. Guidelines were produced for all subjects for the teaching of literacy and although most subjects recognise the importance of literacy in their subject, implementation of the school's guidelines is not consistent. During the week of the inspection it was observed that most pupils are competent readers and are able to read and comprehend the texts and materials used in different subjects. Specialist vocabulary is used well in science, art, design and technology, especially food technology and geography where it is specifically taught. Note taking and drafting skills are good in history. Extended writing is well developed in geography where students undertake detailed case studies, in English and in modern foreign languages in Key Stages 4 and the sixth form. Standards of oracy are good in subjects such as English, religious education and drama where pupils are able to give extended answers to questions and to develop their skills of evaluation and discussion. In modern foreign languages students are given opportunities to read aloud and to develop confidence as speakers.
86. Overall the subject has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Results in national tests and examinations are above average and similar to those at the time of the school's previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is also similar. There have, however, been significant improvements in the management of the subject, which is now good and utilises well the many strengths of the department. There is now good systematic planning for the subject. Teaching, pupils' work and teachers' planning are regularly reviewed and evaluated, leading to curriculum adaptation and development. There is good, well focussed support for pupils with special educational needs which enables them to make good progress and to develop well their personal and academic confidence. Through these improvements English has made a good contribution to the whole school action plan to address the issues from the previous inspection. The school's strategies to support the development of pupils' literacy skills have not yet had sufficient time to impact on national tests and examinations.
87. The quality of teaching is good across all three key stages and supports well the good learning seen in lessons. This includes pupils with special educational needs. All teaching is satisfactory and twenty five percent is very good or better. The best teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge and expertise which enables teachers to select texts and plan activities which are well matched to pupils' needs and which provide a good level of challenge. Questioning techniques are used effectively to ensure pupils' understanding and to encourage them to explore a wider range of skills and ideas. Explanations, instructions and exposition are very clear so that pupils know what they have to do and can proceed purposefully. This was seen in a Year 11 lesson where the teacher was revising the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy as part of the class's preparation for GCSE. The teacher ensured that all

pupils understood the aims of the lesson by writing them clearly on the board and that they knew how the lesson activities linked with their examination requirements. Resources and activities are carefully selected to interest and motivate pupils. In a Year 9 lesson lower attaining pupils were involved in watching the film 'The Mighty'. Through the discussion of issues such as bravery, respect and friendship they developed well their confidence in class discussion and their abilities to express their own ideas. Productive, positive relationships between pupils, students and teachers are a strength of the department. Teachers know their pupils well and give them good encouragement and support. Where there are weaknesses in teaching they are reflected in some loss of pace where the teacher's explanations are too long thus weakening pupils' concentration and the impact of the lesson. In one or two lessons the organisation of the lesson was not sufficiently purposeful and the intended outcomes of the lesson were not reinforced or clarified.

88. English is well managed by a head of department who has a clear vision for the development of the subject and who has identified appropriate priorities. There has been an efficient response to identified areas for development, such as the development of a successful English Language course in the sixth form and wider reading programme in Key Stage 3. The department has worked hard to minimise the effect of a long term absence and there has been very thorough monitoring of the groups affected. Examination results indicate that the school's support for these groups has been effective. The head of department is well supported by the collegiate approach of a strong team of teachers who work and plan closely together on similar units of work. The head of department regularly monitors classroom teaching, teachers' planning and pupils' work and provides useful feedback for her colleagues. The planned curriculum has good outline documentation but there is too limited identification of how literacy and oracy skills can be developed through the key stages. This is particularly relevant to the school's and the department's recognised need for the development of pupils' literacy skills. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' progress and effective use is made of departmental agreement on standards which are applied to pupils' work and ensure consistency within the department. The use of target setting to support pupils' skills in assessing their own progress is still developing and is, at present, too broad and general to be easily measurable and to identify small achievable progressive steps. Although good use is made of a satisfactory range of resources the capitation allowance for English does not reflect the priority the school has given to the development of literacy.
89. The curriculum in English is well enhanced by visits to the theatre, writing workshops in such places as Ty Newydd in North Wales and visits from writers and theatre groups. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural and social awareness and a sound contribution to their moral and spiritual development. Younger pupils are given opportunities to develop their understanding of how their culture and language has been enriched in their study of mythology and folktales. Older students consider friendship in their study of 'Mice and Men' and how attitudes to wealth and possessions affect people's actions in their study of 'The Great Gatsby'. Teachers in the department provide good encouragement for thoughtful and perceptive discussions and positive role models for pupils and students.

DRAMA

90. Drama is taught as a separate subject to all pupils in Key Stage 3 and is available as an optional GCSE course in Key Stage 4 and as an A-level Theatre Studies course in the sixth form. GCSE results have been above average for the last two years and provisional school data for the present year indicate standards are well above average. Numbers of students in the sixth form are too small to enable valid statistical comparisons. Recruitment to A level courses has been inconsistent over the last three years making comparisons across the years invalid.
91. Work seen in drama during the week of the inspection was limited to two lessons, both of which indicate a good standard. Year 11 students have a good understanding of how to work productively together and have a good range of strategies to resolve issues around the use of space, the adaptation of text, and the use of action and gesture to support characterisation. The texts chosen by the students presented a good level of challenge and indicate a good awareness of the work of a range of writers from Harold Pinter to television scripts. Year 12 students in their work to develop their own script into a performance showed that they were able to work well as a group and to recognise each other's varying skills and to maintain a good focus on a common purpose. They have a good awareness of the processes involved in developing a production. In the lesson seen there was good understanding of the effect of movement and group formation to enhance the dramatic impact of their work.

92. The head of department is currently the only specialist teacher in the department and indications are that when the subject is taught by a specialist teacher the standard of teaching is good. The school has appointed another specialist teacher to the department for the next academic year. Lessons seen were well planned and the teacher had good specialist knowledge which enabled her to develop students' skills well. Students are given a good understanding of the organisation and processes involved in drama and they respond productively to the teacher's high expectations. Curriculum planning and review is satisfactory. There are good guidelines for the teaching of the subject by non-specialist teachers and a satisfactory outline of the range of activities and skills for each key stage. The head of department has begun the process of developing a more detailed curriculum which aligns the development of pupils' skills with appropriate levels in the National Curriculum. The curriculum is well enhanced by visits to local and national theatres and students in the sixth form are taking part in a drama project with the school's partner in Italy.

MATHEMATICS

93. Standards in mathematics are some of the best in the school and are well above expectation. The subject has shown satisfactory improvement since the last inspection although departmental monitoring and the implementation of policies remain underdeveloped.
94. The pupils' results in the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests were well above national standards in terms of the percentages of pupils reaching level 5 and level 6. The average point score was well above the national average and well above the average in comparison with similar schools. The pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is well above the national average so that achievement in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. The results have remained consistent over the past three years although there was a slight fall between 1998 and 1999. The performance of pupils in mathematics is above science and above English. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
95. The pupils' results in the 1999 GCSE mathematics examination were well above national standards and well above the average for similar schools. The attainment of this group of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 confirms that the number of A* to C grades was above that to be expected so that achievement in Key Stage 4 is good. The percentage of A* to C grades has continued to increase in line with national standards over the past three years. The performance in mathematics is above science and above English. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. The students' results in the 1999 A-level examinations were well above national averages.
96. In lessons and in samples of work seen, standards are well above national averages and in line with those achieved in the 1999 examinations. There is an appropriate emphasis on number work although using and applying mathematics is less prominent and pupils' thinking skills are not sufficiently developed. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and in a bottom Year 7 class, pupils were challenged to investigate consecutive numbers, which developed their thinking skills and allowed them to find their own strategies to solve the task. Opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills are often missed and teachers do not always encourage the precise use of vocabulary in their lessons. Pupils' capability in information technology is not sufficiently developed in mathematics. The department has access to computers but information technology is grossly under utilised due to the poor reliability of hardware and the general reluctance of mathematics staff.
97. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum and the effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills are good. There is no whole school numeracy policy but the department has made a good response to the issue of numeracy highlighted in the last report and now provides regular numeracy homework, which actively encourages the involvement of parents. Numeracy is developed well in science through graphical work, the use of formulae and the processing of data such as averages and rates of reaction. Pupils practise their technical drawing skills, undertake surveys and handle data in design and technology and, in geography, they make good use of numeracy through work on graphs, map references and population statistics. In information technology, opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills are underdeveloped especially for the most able pupils whose work lacks development and challenge.
98. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 are now well above national expectations and standards in the sixth form remain consistently good. The department is managed well and administered efficiently. The role of the head of department in monitoring work in classrooms and the implementation of policies remains underdeveloped. Teaching, in too many classes, is too teacher led and directed with insufficient opportunities to develop

pupils' learning skills. Standards of achievement in number have improved but pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics requires further development, especially at Key Stage 3. Computers are still not used extensively to support pupils' learning.

99. Teaching is good overall and the best teaching was observed in years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in Key Stage 3 and very good subject knowledge in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The best lessons are exemplified by high expectations, good pace and challenging work which encourages pupil's interest and intellectual effort. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher related the work on ratios to real life examples and there was an appropriate balance between exposition and practice, which allowed the pupils to be more actively involved in their learning. In a minority of lessons, especially at Key Stage 3, teaching does not take account of the spread of ability and teacher talk dominates the lesson. In a Year 9 class, too much time was spent going over homework and discussing questions which only a few pupils had got wrong thus wasting valuable curriculum time which might have been better used by challenging and extending pupils' mathematical ability.
100. The subject curriculum meets statutory requirements and good curriculum planning is encouraged through detailed schemes of work although these are not provided for the sixth form classes or for some of the bottom sets. Provision for using and applying mathematics is variable and insufficient attention is given to information technology. There is no written policy on marking so that the marking of books is inconsistent and teachers' comments too brief to help pupils understand what they must do to improve. Testing and assessment are not aligned to national curriculum levels and there is an over reliance on individual teachers' informal knowledge of pupils' abilities with insufficient formal tracking of pupil's progress from year to year.
101. The head of department provides good leadership to the department. There is a clear vision and purpose within the area but this is not yet sufficiently shared by all staff. Procedures are well established and administration is very thorough but the lack of departmental documentation results in some variation of practice across the department. The head of department monitors the department in terms of monthly tests but classroom observations are not undertaken to identify and act upon strengths and weaknesses. Challenging targets for the department and individual classes are not provided, so that there is insufficient commitment to improvement and development in the subject. New staff are well supported by the head of department but there is insufficient continuing professional development for long serving staff to ensure that they are more fully aware of advances in educational practice.

SCIENCE

102. The overall standards pupils achieve at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 at ages 14 and 16 are above the national average and in line with those of similar schools. At A level the overall standards are in line with national expectations. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
103. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 at age 14 attaining level 5 and above is well above the national average. The average National Curriculum points score attained by pupils in 1999 is well above the national average when compared with all schools and in line with that of similar schools. In the four years 1996-1999 the performance in science exceeded the national average by the equivalent of 3.5 points. The overall trend was almost level in the three years 1996-1998 but showed a slight fall in 1999. The performance of pupils in science is below that in mathematics but above that in English.
104. In the 1999 GCSE science examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C is well above the national average for all pupils and those for boys. The performance in science at these grades is slightly below that in English and mathematics. Over the last three years the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C shows an improvement in line with the national trend. Over the last three years however the proportion of boys achieving the highest grades has declined which reflects the lack of challenge for able pupils observed in some lessons.
105. In 1999 the results of A level examinations in physics and chemistry are above national averages but are below those in English and mathematics. Those in biology are below the national averages, but showed an improvement in 1999 over 1998. They are below most of the other major subjects in the school. The small numbers involved make it difficult to provide a clear explanation for this underperformance. The school reports that students who follow an A-level course combining biology

with mathematics, chemistry or physics, achieve higher grades in biology than those who study a combination of other subjects.

106. Pupils achievements at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with those expected from their scores on entry to the school. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 of the highest ability pupils is lower than expected from national test results. That of middle and lower ability pupils is better than expected. Pupils with special educational needs show good achievement at both keystages.
107. In lessons and in samples of work seen, standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with the national average. Pupils generally organise their written work well, construct tables of results with clear headings and units and are accurate when drawing graphs. The standards of work seen at Key Stage 4 are also in line with the national average. Pupils progress to constructing tables of results which contain increased amounts of complex data and plot a greater range of graphs and charts. Diagrams of scientific apparatus are sometimes carelessly drawn and lack the accuracy expected of pupils at this stage. The standard of work at A-level across all three subjects is good. Students generally make their own notes from lessons and from a range of good texts. Such notes are comprehensive and carefully written which helps students in their revision for modular exams.
108. In the relatively small number of lessons observed in which practical work took place, pupils in Years 7, 9 and 12 were able to carry out instructions at an appropriate level and did so with a skill which only comes from practice. The results of considerable practical work was evident in exercise books. Pupils produce extended practical projects at Key Stage 3. They are able to make simple predictions and they develop observation and recording skills. This lays a sound foundation for the work which they must present for moderation by the examination board at GCSE. The investigations carried out by Key Stage 4 pupils are of a good standard and show that the pupils have developed their practical skills. They include the analysis of data using scientific knowledge and understanding and the evaluation of the accuracy and reliability of their procedures. The range of expertise in such investigations is wide but in line with that evident in nationally produced exemplar materials for SC1. A level students produce similarly good practical work in physics when investigating the effect of angular oscillation on a variously suspended ruler and in biology when reporting on different ecological habitats. Practical work is a strength of the department.
109. The department contributes effectively to the development of literacy with a clear and implemented policy on spelling and occasions when pupils are encouraged to read texts out loud. Pupils at all levels have numeracy skills appropriate to their level, can calculate averages and rates of reaction, use chemical and mathematical formulae and can produce graphs and charts from raw and processed data. Pupils at all keystages are given opportunities to use computers within the department, in the adjacent business studies suite and in the library. Many pupils are able to use word processing and data presentation packages at all stages but especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Their use of CD ROM's for research improves their ability to learn independently.
110. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Pupils are able to evaluate their own observations and measurements, as a result of the early introduction of extended pieces of practical work in Key Stage 3. Independent learning is better developed but pupils need continued opportunities to enhance this skill. Good assessment procedures exist at Key Stages 3 and 4 although the information is not used effectively to set targets. The performance of the middle and lower attaining pupils at GCSE has improved. There has however been a decrease in the proportions of pupils achieving the higher grades at GCSE and in the performance of pupils in advanced level biology since the last inspection.
111. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed in which the management of the poor behaviour of a small group of pupils was inadequate. This prevented other more conscientious pupils from completing the set task. The best teaching is seen in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. The best lessons are characterised by good pace and challenge and demand that pupils apply scientific knowledge and understanding to the task in hand. For example in a Year 12 lesson on electrophilic addition where students had to work out the various possible reactions between bromine and alkenes and why they occurred. Good teacher knowledge and understanding of the subject is evident throughout the department. For example, in a Year 10 lesson in which the catalytic cracking of alkenes was related to industrial oil refining. Question and answer sessions are often used to establish the pupils' level of knowledge and pupils generally participate willingly. Where pupils are given the opportunity to discuss their work in depth as in a Year 11 lesson on the formation and influence of "black holes" they display interest and sound scientific understanding. This does not however happen often enough.

112. Teachers generally produce lessons plans with clear aims and objectives. When these are shared with the pupils they know exactly what to do in the lesson. This was seen with a Year 7 group of lower ability pupils who quickly and in an orderly manner moved from one station to another testing and recording colour changes in litmus paper subjected to different acids and alkalis. At Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort and pupils respond by showing interest and a willingness to learn. At Key Stage 4 the content of some lessons is insufficiently challenging for the higher attainers and lessons lack pace. For example in a Year 11 lesson on brain structure and function, pupils made notes from a textbook, when duplicated notes would have been more appropriate. No clear time limit was set for this task, pupils lost concentration and were not fully engaged in their work. These pupils acquire knowledge easily and require more academically demanding lessons and homework and increased opportunities to use their initiative and test their scientific understanding. They develop these skills quickly in Year 12 but are not given sufficient opportunities in Years 10 and 11. Teachers willingly provide additional support in extra sessions, thus enabling pupils to make up for absence and to undertake practical investigations which require longer than the 70 minutes allowed by lessons. This increases the range of work undertaken for GCSE practical assessment and allows A-level candidates to better prepare for practical examinations. Marking is regular and up to date. All teachers award marks out of ten according to clear criteria but the pupils are not aware of these criteria. This prevents them from knowing what to do to improve their marks. Some teachers indicate exactly what the pupil must do to improve but such comments are not used by all teachers. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are almost invariably good.
113. The department includes twelve teachers and is one of the largest in the school. The management structure is complicated with each of five teachers having areas of responsibility, some of which overlap. Despite this, clear policies exist for whole department issues such as marking, literacy, and homework, which are discussed and reviewed in full departmental meetings. The department has been much less effective in identifying strategies for challenging the more able pupils and improving their learning opportunities. Teachers have observed each others' lessons but have not effectively shared good teaching practice. The department assesses and monitors the attainment of pupils at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 helping them to set targets for future achievement. These targets are recorded as percentages but are not clearly related to national levels and GCSE grades. Few pupils are clear as to the skills and knowledge required at each level/grade and thus are unsure as to what to do to improve their performance. The science curriculum meets statutory requirements and planning is supported by detailed schemes of work.
114. Two chemistry labs are in poor physical state and this has a negative influence on learning. With the exception of the biology areas, opportunities are missed to stimulate pupils' interest in science by placing their work on display. Science club and the Young Scientist of the Year competition affords pupils the opportunity to broaden their interest in science beyond that required by the National Curriculum. Contact with universities is good and sixth form students studying the Food and Health Module showed enthusiasm in their preparation for a visit to Reading University in the week following the inspection.
115. There are a number of areas requiring further developments. The under achievement of GCSE pupils in the higher grades is particularly urgent. The department has already started addressing this issue. There needs to be a whole department analysis of teaching strategies, identifying and sharing best practice. Other successful departments within the school can provide examples of good practice. The management of time should be carefully assessed so that full use is made of every learning opportunity. Both of these measures should have as their targeted outcome the greater challenging of all pupils especially the more able pupils. The performance of students at all grades in Advanced level biology requires attention. The department must evaluate preparation of students for the examination, establish a more effective system for tracking the progress of students from the onset of the advanced course, and evaluate quantitatively the performance of biology students against their progress and attainment in their other advanced level subjects.

ART

116. Standards in art are above expectation and a strength of the school. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection although there are concerns about monitoring and development planning.

117. In 1999 standards achieved in GCSE were well above national averages for schools of this type for both A*-C and A*-G grades. Results have been similar over recent years and the trend has been level. Pupils have generally performed better in art than in their other GCSE subjects. Standards at Advanced Level GCE are also well above national averages with a marked improvement in students achieving the highest grades A & B in 1999 over 1998 and previous years.
118. Standards in lessons observed during the inspection in Key Stage 3 are above the national expectation for 14 year-olds; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above the expectation and those at the end of the Sixth Form are well above expectation. The slightly lower standards seen in some Year 11 groups are appropriate to the range of abilities in the cohort. In Key Stage 3 pupils develop good practical skills in a broad range of media. They successfully develop competence when using and applying the formal elements of line, tone, form etc. For example the skills learned in Y7 from direct observation drawing are generally well developed through frequent revisiting in later projects. Making skills in three-dimensional work are also generally good. The development of ideas and experimental work is less apparent in project work at this stage. The understanding of the methods and styles of other artists is more variable in quality across the keystone. Some excellent work reflecting a thorough understanding of period, style and meaning was seen in the Year 9 'Pop Art' project. Reference to, and understanding of, multicultural aspects of our society are however absent in pupils' work. The use of information technology is not sufficiently represented. Subsequently the provision does not comply with statutory requirements at this stage.
119. By the age of 16 pupils have developed a very good range of experiences including photography and more traditional media. They have very good skills in drawing and painting and a good understanding of the research process. For example in Year 11, final examination work showed a good use of colour with many very accomplished preliminary studies of natural and made objects. Where there are weaknesses these are linked to less effective teaching and pupils are unclear about the purpose of their work. Subsequently they are tentative in developing their ideas and carrying out research. By the age of 18 all students have very well developed subject knowledge shown in both practical and theory aspects of the subject. Ideas are carefully researched and expressed with confident, often impressive, use of traditional and experimental approaches. Students at this level talk authoritatively about their work and match their high levels of subject knowledge with accomplished practical work. Throughout the keystages literacy skills are enhanced with frequent reference to, and accurate use of, subject-specific language and specialist terminology.
120. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Improvement has been made in the numbers of pupils opting to take the GCE Advanced Level courses in the Sixth Form and some systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress have been introduced. Results at A Level have improved since last year although the percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades in the GCSE examinations has remained static over recent years.
121. Teaching in art and design is good and sometimes very good in all stages. One lesson of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4 was seen during the inspection. Teaching is unsatisfactory when the objectives and intended outcomes of the lesson are not explicit. This is also a weakness in the planning of projects and pupils are unclear about the direction their work should take. Some pupils are not engaged and teaching fails to recognise the lack of progress in learning. In the majority of lessons however teaching promotes at least satisfactory and often good rates of learning. The tasks set appropriate challenge to pupils and teachers' methods effectively address the range of abilities within groups. Teachers use their knowledge of the subject to promote good learning through demonstrations and their interaction with individuals. For example in some Year 11 and Year 9 lessons the teacher frequently presented additional challenge particularly to higher attaining pupils, by careful, challenging questioning and demonstration of new techniques. The quality of learning is also enhanced by the support and guidance provided through the good quality supporting materials given in some lessons.
122. The subject is satisfactorily managed on a day to day basis. The Head of Department provides a good ethos and maintains very good relationships with pupils and staff. Expectations are high and effective in maintaining the good progress and outcomes achieved by pupils. Strategic development of the subject however is not sufficiently focused on achieving sustained improvement. The planning for coverage and development of the Key Stage 3 curriculum is currently lacking in important detail. Schemes of work are incomplete and not monitored to ensure coverage and balance. Subsequently the current high standards, progression and continuity of learning are at risk and the equality of access to a balanced curriculum is not secure across the keystone. In addition, monitoring and evaluation of

teaching and learning is not systematically carried out to ensure that successful teaching is recognised, discussed and shared for the benefit of all pupils.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

123. Standards in design and technology are in line with expectations. The school does not satisfy the legal requirement for pupils in Key Stage 4 with a significant proportion of pupils who do not study the subject.
124. At the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level 5 in the 1999 teacher assessments is above national averages but the proportion reaching higher levels is below. Observations made during the inspection support these. There has been a gradual improvement in Key Stage 3 assessments over the last four years.
125. At Key Stage 4, comparisons against national data are invalid as the school is not compliant with the national requirement for all pupils to take a design and technology course. Approximately one third of the 1999 Year 11 examination cohort took such a course and were entered for an examination. The results obtained at GCSE by those pupils are good overall and compare very favourably with other subjects at the school. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection. They show a notable improvement over those of the previous two years, where, for example, the proportion of pupils gaining an A-C grade in Food Technology trebled from 1998 to 1999. Exceptional performances are recorded in Graphic Products and Industrial Production with high proportions of pupils gaining the top A* and A grades. Very high proportions of pupils gained A-C grades in Electronics and Resistant Materials. With the exception of Auto-engineering, all pupils obtained at least a grade G. Small numbers of candidates however were entered for each examination.
126. At Advanced Level, results over time have been consistently good. Over the last three years all students have gained at least a grade E and in 1998 three out of four students gained a grade A or B. In 1999, results were average but there were only a small number of candidates entered for the examination.
127. Pupils' achievement improves as they progress through the school. This is because teachers gain a greater understanding of each individual's strengths and weaknesses and forge more constructive relationships with them. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. This good progress is supported by teaching which is sympathetic to their needs and the weaknesses in their literacy levels. Such support ensures that they understand and can cope with the work set. There are a small number of pupils at Key Stage 4 who find the expectations of GCSE work difficult to meet.
128. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are broadly in line with the expected level for 14 year-olds. The major proportion of pupils at Key Stage 4 do not take a design and technology course and therefore standards at the end of the keystage are unsatisfactory. Pupils who do take a design and technology course however, achieve above average standards. At the end of the sixth form, student achievements are in line with national expectations.
129. At Key Stage 3, pupils adopt a disciplined approach to manufacturing. They measure, cut and shape accurately and with a good regard for safety. They make an interesting range of products from wood, plastics, metal and food. Design skills are not as well developed, though skills in technical drawing are of a high level. Pupils use computer graphics effectively to cut templates for packaging. Lower attaining pupils have sufficient literacy skills to ensure that the standards they achieve are above the expectation for their ability. Higher attaining pupils do not achieve their creative and intellectual potential. At Key Stage 4, many pupils who take design and technology courses develop a good understanding of the design process. However their knowledge of the materials with which they work is limited. Folders accompanying project work can be of a high standard with an impressive use of desk-top-publishing techniques. This work illustrates clearly the stages of development that pupils use as they interpret the design process. However this work does not relate sufficiently to the way modern industry deals with technological problems. Some higher attaining pupils understand complex electronic systems. Lower attaining pupils generate high level questions about electrical and mechanical systems in cars. In the sixth form, students understand why design outcomes need to be fit for their purpose, accommodate the views and preferences of others well, but their thinking is narrowly focussed. They lack negotiation skills when collaborating with peers. Quantitative data is rigorously

collected through surveys, processed graphically and judged, to inform the development of manufactured products.

130. Literacy standards are good overall, particularly when the teacher emphasises their importance in food courses. Numeracy is good and pupils pay careful attention to accuracy and validity of data, often when dealing with complex problems and issues. Standards in information technology are good reflecting the extensive use of computers to aid designing and manufacturing at all stages.
131. In respect of the issues raised in the last inspection progress has been satisfactory but as the school is now non-compliant at Key Stage 4, overall progress cannot be satisfactory. In the last inspection design was less well developed than manufacturing and below national expectations. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form considerable improvement has taken place, but some imbalance remains at Key Stage 3. Pupils at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form achieve better than they did at the previous inspection.
132. The quality of teaching is good at each key stage. It varies from very good to unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 whilst at Key Stage 4 it is more consistently good. In the sixth form, teachers are more sensitive to the learning needs of individuals.
133. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form teachers understand pupils' strengths and weaknesses in terms of their achievements and potential. This allows pupils to build confidence in the subject and set more appropriate targets in relation to their needs and abilities. When the teaching is very good in a Year 11 electronics lesson, the teacher used his expert knowledge of the subject to set very high expectations and targets for each individual. High attaining pupils learnt how to construct latch circuits and amplifiers for particular design problems that had been carefully analysed. They were able to test and evaluate their ideas using circuit modelling computer software in imaginative ways. The teacher stimulated confidence and self-belief through his careful planning, guidance, oral and written feedback.
134. In a Year 9 lesson where the teaching was unsatisfactory pupils were constructing an interesting 'steady hand game' but the lesson was unstructured. The teacher was unable to gain control over the direction and pace of the lesson. Despite this, the pupils were motivated by the task. They learnt how to create vacuum-formed containers and simple electronic circuits for their games. When the teaching is satisfactory but less than good in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher introduced perspective drawing, but took little account of the pupils' prior attainment or views. They responded to instructions but were given no opportunity to reflect on the content of the lesson or clarify their own understanding. In consequence, the pupils developed high level skills in technical drawing, but they did not gain a wider range of independent learning skills. The teaching did not encourage evaluative or analytical skills; the knowledge of how to apply the skills pupils had developed; nor were they building the confidence to challenge ideas.
135. The assessment system developed by the department is generally effective. Whilst the data is used well to promote better pupil achievements, it is not used to improve teaching at Key Stage 3. The length and continuity of the time allocations to food modules throughout the key stage are inadequate for pupils to receive a meaningful experience. Additionally, some higher attaining pupils in Year 9 do not receive sufficient time to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum. Strong leadership creates a good work ethic in the department through the conscientious professional efforts of the staff. The monitoring of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory and this leads to weaknesses in some aspects of development planning.

GEOGRAPHY

136. Standards in geography are above expectations at all stages and are amongst the best in the school. It is a highly effective subject and has made good progress since the last inspection.
137. The teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in the last two years show results well above the national average by a highly significant amount. This is higher than standards seen at this stage of the year in Key Stage 3 and match the very high standards subsequently reached in Key Stage 4. The GCSE results in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above the national average, as they have been in other recent years. 1999 results include an outstanding proportion of pupils entered being awarded A* or A. Pupils have tended to obtain significantly better results in geography in recent years than those obtained in their other subjects; this is particularly marked in 1999. At the end of the sixth form, the A-level results are above the national average in 1999 with all students obtaining at least a grade D, and one third obtaining the two highest grades. All but two obtained better A-level grades than would be expected from their GCSE results indicating good

achievement across the two years. There is a pattern of improvement in A-level results over the past three years; 1998 results are also above the national average with the top grades well above; 1997 results are in line with the national figures.

138. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are above expected levels. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above, whilst those at the end of the sixth form are above. Standards of literacy are above expectations across a broad range of writing, speaking, and listening skills. Numeracy skills are also above, especially at A-level. Computer skills are in line with expectations at all stages.
139. At Key Stage 3, use of geographical terminology is good from most pupils, helped by the emphasis on key words, often reinforced by spelling tests. There is good achievement across the ability range with the quality of diagrams a particular strength. A similar range of topics is covered with all pupils. However lower attaining pupils show less technical competence in extended writing and their presentation skills are weaker. In a class mainly of pupils with special educational needs, most were able to follow the sequence of the lesson and show some sound basic knowledge. In classes of higher ability pupils, there is very high achievement. For example, they are able to write about causes and effects of migration, produce tourist guides on Swanage or technical papers on how to protect a coastline. Year 9 work on Japan shows a very wide range of high achievement. This includes a case study of Osaka, a magazine article looking at pollution problems in Japan, a poster about Japan's trade, an internet exercise to find out about regional characteristics, and a letter from a Japanese farmer to an English farmer.
140. At Key Stage 4, high attainers are achieving at very high levels and are making very good progress. They produce very detailed work and thorough marking ensures learning moves forward rapidly. Case studies of particular geographical areas are of a very high standard. Lower ability groups are also achieving very well and making very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs in lower attaining groups are making good progress. Notebooks are full and detailed, often helped by very positive marking. At A-level, there is good achievement and progress across all aspects of the course. The quality of files seen during the inspection is very high; they are well organised and detailed. There is extensive use of statistical techniques and computers in individual studies. As at Key Stage 4, the depth of analysis in case studies is exceptional. Achievement in most cases is high in relation to prior attainment.
141. Geography has made good progress since the last inspection. Results have improved and, for several years, pupils have done better in geography than in the other subjects they take; high standards are reached at all stages and at all levels. The very good leadership and management have focused on improvement. Particular attention has been given to ensuring that rigorous assessment procedures, the extensive use of assessment information, and the thorough monitoring of teaching by regular observations are raising standards. Fieldwork remains a strength; the subject is making good progress in incorporating information technology into its schemes of work, and is now making good use of the suite of computers in the subject area.
142. Teaching is good at all stages. Much is very good, and none is less than satisfactory. The best teaching has very good planning, high expectations, very detailed marking, very good use of resources, fast pace and challenge. With these characteristics, very good teaching brings very productive learning, with pupils concentrating hard, being challenged, and developing and consolidating their knowledge and understanding. In one Year 7 lesson, there was very detailed marking of an assessment, using National Curriculum levels. Pupils were very clear about the standard they had reached, and they were given a sheet with precise details of what they needed to do to get better. They were required to analyse their own performance and how much progress they had made, and to use this analysis to set three targets for improvement. The very well planned lesson had sharply timed, varied activities. Instructions and explanations were clear and crisp, and the teacher circulated to give help to those needing it, while maintaining tight control of behaviour. There was very good use of many resources, including duplicated sheets, a high quality video, and two textbooks, one providing extension tasks to stretch the most able. There were extremely high expectations, and the boys responded with very positive attitudes to learning, being keen to work and wanting to do well. In another lesson with a class containing many pupils with special educational needs, clear explanations from the teacher were very appropriate and also challenging. The high quality of the questioning, used pupils' answers to take the learning forward and enabled pupils to make good progress. There was very good use of overhead transparencies as a focus for technical vocabulary and for consolidating the learning. There was firm control, but plenty of praise, which encouraged much active participation.

Revision programmes for Year 11 classes are very thorough, and adapted to the needs of each class; they are also varied to provide interest and motivation at this stage of the course. In one lesson, the teacher had prepared very well, including two different prompt sheets for each pair of boys so that, when they were working in pairs for part of the lesson, they could question each other and stimulate discussion. Again, there was a very brisk pace and the precise timing kept learning at a high level. A separate homework gave an additional dimension to the learning.

143. Geography is a highly effective subject in the school, with its methods and procedures contributing to its high standards. Its assessment arrangements are a model of good practice. Pupils' progress can be tracked through the use of National Curriculum levels. Thorough record keeping and good marking, especially of assessment tasks, form the basis of target setting. At Key Stage 4 and at A-level, prior performance is used for setting targets and predicting grades. Progress is closely monitored and encouragement is provided to enable pupils to improve their work. There is also careful analysis of results to determine what value has been added to pupils' achievements. The team of five specialist teachers brings a wide range of strengths and expertise. Good resources and very good displays also contribute to the stimulating learning environment. There are no significant weaknesses. There is a clear view of what still needs to be done including additional material to support middle ability groups.

HISTORY

144. Standards in history are well above national expectations at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. They are above expectations by the end of the sixth form. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
145. Assessments made by teachers at the end of KS3, in 1999, indicate that standards are well above those expected of pupils by the age of 14 years. These assessments indicate that there are significant numbers of pupils reaching levels 6 and 7 and fewer below level 5. These levels are confirmed by evidence from the inspection and have been maintained over the past three years.
146. Standards achieved in the GCSE examinations in 1999 indicate a continuation of this pattern with standards well above national averages for pupils at the age of 16 years across all schools. The average point score is significantly above that achieved nationally. These high standards have been maintained over the last three years. At the end of the Sixth Form standards are above national expectations of students of a similar age, albeit with a small number of pupils. This standard has been maintained over the past three years. The standards reached in the 'A' level GCE is confirmed by the inspection evidence.
147. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards of work seen during the inspection support the assessments made by teachers and are well above that expected of 14-year-old pupils. Pupils know that the outcome of World War One is seen differently by different groups of people. They understand that the end of the war created expectations among the returning soldiers that the government at the time could not meet. They use sources of historical evidence to support their views. Other pupils understand that political change after the war was not uniform and whilst in Germany some saw the change as a means to a brighter future while others did not. Pupils are confident in the use of chronology.
148. At the end of Key Stage 4 the standards of work seen during the inspection are well above those expected by pupils of a similar age. They know the reasons why castles were built in the Welsh Marches during medieval times and how the use of the castles changed during the medieval period. They compare marcher castles with other in different parts of England and reflect upon their use. They use chronology to more accurately reflect changes over time. They use various sources of information - primary and secondary sources, information technology to collect and collate information to produce their studies.
149. Students in the sixth form achieve above expectations. They assess the role of Bismarck in the unification of Germany and use the work of historians to support their arguments as to his achievement. They understand the wider context of Bismarck's actions including the role of the Catholic Church in Germany and the disenchantment of the Prussian conservatives. They gather information from various sources to produce well argued essays supported by evidence from their reading.
150. The development of literacy at both key stages and in the sixth form is good. The development of information technology is satisfactory and that of numeracy is unsatisfactory. Reading and writing skills are well developed and pupils evaluate written sources of evidence and collect information from

various sources to produce their own work. They use computers to access information from a CD-ROM about knights and castles in the middle ages. They use word processing and place pictures into text to produce accounts of their recent field trip to the World War Battlefields. The development of literacy is a strength. The use of numeracy is underdeveloped and there are limited opportunities for pupils to assess and evaluate statistical and other numerical evidence.

151. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The standards achieved at the end of the key stages have been maintained in line with national expectations. However, there has been an improvement in the teaching at Key Stage 3 as seen in lesson observations made during the inspection and the scrutiny of pupils' work. The appropriate use of information technology has been developed. Both of which were issues at the last inspection. Informal monitoring of teaching has now resulted in consistent teaching across Key Stage three and this has also been an improvement since the last inspection.
152. Teaching is good overall. All lessons seen in both key stages and the sixth form are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to provide challenging work for the pupils. Pupils are given time to think and reflect upon their learning and yet the pace set in lessons is brisk and appropriate. Teachers encourage pupils to talk about their work and ideas and this helps them to refine their ideas and develop their speaking skills. This allows pupils to become confident learners. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and work. The pupils respond very well and this. It is reflected in their enthusiasm and enjoyment of their learning. The work of pupils is carefully marked and assessments are regularly carried out so that pupils and students have an idea of their standards of work and how they can improve on it. Homework is regularly set and is matched to extend work in the class. However, on occasions the teacher's expectations of homework both in quality and in the amount of time to be spent does not support the expectation of high standards. The high expectations of teachers' drives the standards achieved for all pupils of higher and middle ability pupils. The lowest attaining pupils in a banded group also have appropriate expectations. However, the limited teaching strategies used place comparatively greater pressure on those lower attaining pupils in the broad ability, middle band groups.
153. The management is satisfactory. The management of the subject maintains a clear and common standard of expectations by all teachers. This consistency contributes to raising high standards of pupils' achievement. The use of assessment is effective in raising standards in Key Stage 4 where pupils are aware of the standards expected of them and the means of improving on them. There is limited formal monitoring of teaching and learning and development planning is not a strength of the department.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

154. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in GCSE Information Technology examinations in 1999 is well above national averages. GCSE results show a consistent upward trend and in comparison with other subjects in the school, these results are average. In the sixth form, students without access to information technology as part of their A level programme, take four modules of the Computer Learning and Information Technology course, where the majority gained certification in 1999. Year 9 Teacher Assessments show those pupils gaining Level 5 or above in 1999 are well above the national averages and are consistent with the previous year.
155. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are average and in line with national expectations for 14 year-olds; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above average and above national expectations in the GCSE Information Technology course. In the sixth form, attainment in the CLAIT (Computer Learning and Information Technology) course, taken as part of the complimentary studies programme, are in line with expectations.
156. In Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils have developed an average standard of keyboard skills. Standards are satisfactory in the application of communicating and handling information using a word processor and a desk-top publishing presentation program. Spreadsheet and database programs are also used well to assemble data and present it, following simple sorting activities and the use of formulae to make calculations. Some opportunities are provided for pupils to search for information and images using both CD ROM and the Internet, particularly in geography and in the library. Attainment in modelling and measuring is underdeveloped. Pupil's understanding and use of control, is above average. They gain good opportunities to develop their knowledge of both on-screen and physical control systems, and develop a good understanding of programme language to control these

different systems in Years 7 and 8. All pupils' are able to use a simple design package well by Year 9. They invest much care in the research and design process, enabling them to produce outcomes of a high standard. For example, they produce a Net, using CAD CAM and then output to a plotter-cutter prior to construction.

157. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' demonstrate a high standard of skills particularly in their use of a database, word processor and spreadsheet. The quality of presentation is above average but not as strong as other aspects of their work. All are able to respond carefully to a brief and engage in extended investigation. For example in a Year 11 lesson where pupils' are bringing together their solutions to update paper-based management systems with information technology. These pupils are creating corporate graphics, databases to organise records, spreadsheets to manage company finances and a mail merge to effectively link many of these functions. Pupils' with special educational needs in Key Stage 3 are achieving standards in line with their peers and in Key Stage 4, they are achieving standards above those expected nationally.
158. Overall, there has been an unsatisfactory level of improvement in the development of information technology since the last inspection. There have been significant changes made to the management, organisation and planning of the subject and the Key Stage 3 programme in particular. This has resulted in a reduced provision, taught partly across the curriculum. The subject co-ordinator has managed this alongside other school commitments. The core course and cross-curricular programme does not now meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 or provide an entitlement for all pupils at Key Stage 4. A basic provision for information technology has been introduced into the sixth form programme. Monitoring of the Key stage 3 programme is still under-developed and does not fully record attainment and progress. The number of computers within the school has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection and many more of these are now very near or beyond their useful life. This is continuing to limit access to specialist resources by some subject areas. The school has implemented a planned programme of development, but the detail of resourcing and the expansion of facilities has not been made available to staff to inform subject based curriculum and development planning. However, the development of staff training in the use of information technology using the New Opportunities Fund, has been identified and as a consequence, an improving range of teachers are now starting to make use of information technology as part of their teaching.
159. The quality of teaching within the core course at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, and within the GCSE course it is good. Teachers' are effective in their organisation of the learning activities in Year 7, but have to focus extensively on file management and computer skills, because many pupils are unfamiliar with the computer system. Overall, planning is brief and focused on learning, but does not identify how the needs of more able pupils will be addressed. Teaching in Year 8 occurs entirely within design and technology and here pupils make good progress largely because it is a very specific experience, taught appropriately within a relevant context. In Year 9, the core-course makes effective links with English and mathematics to inform the context and focus of the learning. The effect of the short modules and break in continuity of the core-course is evident in the pace and depth of achievement which results. Pupils' gain only a brief experience of each aspect of the course in Years 7 and 9 and make satisfactory progress in the development of their skills, but do not gain a sufficient depth of understanding of the software or opportunities to apply their learning. Teachers manage pupils and resources effectively to enable a high percentage of practical computer access, although a limited range of teaching styles were evident. At Key Stage 4, teachers set high expectations and use their good level of subject knowledge to plan and set suitable tasks. Individual lesson planning is a weakness however, as pupils are supported through individual guidance rather than a planned programme of taught content that develops capability and independence. By the end of this course, pupils have a good understanding of the effects of the new technologies on the lives of people and its applications within business.
160. The existing core-course does not fully cover the programmes of study, or provide opportunities for sufficient breadth and depth at Key Stage 3, and as a consequence pupils' achievement suffers. Good links are starting to be made within subjects, but this will need to be supported through improved procedures for monitoring and tracking IT capability; and for improved assessment, recording and reporting of IT across the curriculum. The short duration of the core-course does limit the taught content and clarity of progression. There has also been insufficient attention on literacy and the use of number, impacting particularly on the most able. At Key Stage 4, there are insufficient opportunities for all pupils to follow a course of study including information technology. There is some impact on

standards as a consequence of the age and condition of the provision, particularly where software cannot print and where access to learning using CD ROM is limited by hardware problems. The benefit of pupil's use of computers at home is less evident than might be expected, as a consequence of the lack of compatibility with the core provision. Pupils are unable to continue and extend many aspects of classwork outside of school, unless it is produced quite separately. This does impact on standards, particularly at KS4. Overall, strategic planning will need to address all of these issues and be made sufficiently clear and corporate to enable subjects to plan their developments in information technology in accordance with a core provision, resources and staff development.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

161. Standards in modern languages are in line with expectations in French and above expectations in German. Standards in German have remained high since the previous inspection. Those in French have declined significantly over the same period. Standards in French are worse than standards in other subjects in the school. Standards in German are amongst the best. Leadership of the department and the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. There has been unsatisfactory improvement in modern languages since the last inspection. All pupils study French during their time in school. A selected number of pupils are offered the opportunity to study German from Year 8 on. However, the number of pupils studying two languages in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is lower than expected in a school of this kind.
162. In the 1999 GCSE examinations the proportion of A*-C passes in French is broadly in line with the average for similar schools and below the average for most other subjects in the school. The results for German are well above the national average for similar schools and above the level for most other subjects in the school.
163. In the 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, the number of pupils at the national benchmark of level 5, and the number of pupils above that level were both well below the number expected for pupils of the same age. These assessments covered both French and German.
164. There is a small entry for A level GCE in both French and German and comparisons against national averages are not possible. Of the three students entered in French, one passed at grade B and two at grade D. There were two entries for German and both students passed, one grade B and one at grade C.
165. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with that expected for boys of the same age in French and above that expected in German. For the small number of students in the sixth form standards are above average. There are no significant differences across the four aspects of the subject. Speaking is slightly the strongest because there is an emphasis on it in many lessons. Attainment is higher in German than in French. In general pupils achieve good standards in German, but deficiencies in teaching mean that the majority of pupils do not achieve the levels of which they are capable in French.
166. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils can answer questions, in a basic way, about such topics as school subjects, the weather, descriptions of people, sport and leisure and household tasks. The vast majority of pupils listen carefully to the teacher, to audio tapes and to other pupils when they are speaking and can respond appropriately. Most pupils are confident when speaking and try hard with pronunciation. Their spoken responses progress from single words and short phrases in Year 7 to longer conversations in Year 9. This was seen in a Year 9 German lesson where pupils were discussing their likes and dislikes. Skilled use of question and answer techniques by the teacher gave pupils good opportunities to use, practice and vary their language and to adapt it to different situations. However, weaknesses in teaching in French mean that a large number of pupils do not reach their full potential. There is no specific reading scheme in modern languages, although there are a number of good schemes in the library that could be used well in lessons. However, the commercially produced schemes of work in use do have specific reading sections attached and these provide an adequate course to develop satisfactory reading skills. In their written work the majority of pupils are able to write short paragraphs with reasonable accuracy by the end of the key stage. Higher attaining pupils, especially in German, are able to use a range of tenses in their writing.
167. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils return to these topics and add others such as the world of work, health and booking holidays. By the end of the key stage pupils in French can hold conversations with a number of exchanges and a range of tenses, but only higher attaining pupils show the flexibility in the use of language that is common in German. There are good examples of extended writing from

higher attaining pupils. Students in the sixth form are able to carry out longer conversations on a range of topics such as health and the dangers of drugs and smoking. These students produce good extended writing on a range of topics including letters, accounts and reports of topical events. Teachers make little use of information technology to extend and enrich the curriculum. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to literacy in the school. The subject makes no significant contribution to the development of numeracy skills.

168. Overall the subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection. At that time standards in modern languages were said to be good with GCSE results consistently high. While standards in German have remained high, standards in French have shown a steady and unchecked decline. The previous report stated that pupils used French or German “automatically and confidently” as the main means of communication. In French this is no longer the case in many lessons, and up to half of some lessons are conducted in English. At that time teaching was at least sound with a large number of good and very good lessons. While there are still good and very good lessons in both languages there is now a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in French. A feature of the unsatisfactory teaching at that time was the emphasis on whole class activities. This is still the case.
169. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall. There are differences within this overall picture and teaching is good in German. In French the teaching is unsatisfactory in nearly one-third of the lessons although there is good and very good teaching in one-fifth also. During the inspection all of the unsatisfactory teaching was in Key Stage 3 and this does not provide a satisfactory base for development in Key Stage 4 towards examination preparation. However it is clear that there is unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 4 also. The school's documents provide evidence that examination classes in French were ill prepared by the teachers for their examinations because of a lack of subject knowledge and poor planning. This is clearly a significant factor in the decline in standards in French.
170. A majority of lessons are characterised by the whole class activities mentioned in the previous report. Teachers make little imaginative use of overhead projectors or of role-plays, discussion, group work, music, mime or drama. These would all add to the quality of lessons especially for younger and lower attaining pupils for whom the time allocated to lessons is too long. There is little by way of work tailored to the needs of individual pupils. This was evident, for example, in lessons with lower attaining groups of pupils where a number had statements of individual needs and individual targets that were not considered in the lesson planning. Poor use of the language being taught is a feature of much of the unsatisfactory teaching. In some lessons the main language in use is English and not French or German.
171. Pupils have good attitudes to work and behave well in class. These good attitudes are maintained, in general, even when the teaching is boring and not sufficiently challenging. In those teaching groups where there is a low level of challenging behaviour a number of the teachers do not have appropriate strategies for dealing with it. However, good pupil control is a general strength of the teaching. In those lessons where teaching is good or very good, teachers prepare tasks which challenge pupils to use and vary their language both in speaking and in writing and these teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' performance. Teachers make good use of question and answer sessions to encourage pupils to develop and experiment with the language being taught and make good use of pair work as well as listening and writing tasks.
172. Not all pupils have equality of access to the full curriculum because many do not have opportunities to study the two languages on offer. The handbook and scheme of work have been revised and provide a consistent and progressive programme of work for pupils. There are good procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. However, the data provided is not used to plan the curriculum or to discuss pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses or to set targets for them. The overall leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory because of the school's failure to monitor the quality of teaching and learning with the rigour necessary to maintain and improve standards.

MUSIC

173. Standards in music are in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and above expectations at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. There has been satisfactory improvement in standards since the last inspection although the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3.

174. In 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades in music at GCSE is well above the national average. Results at GCSE have been above average for the last three years. At 'A' level, the numbers of students achieving A to B grades have been broadly average for the last three years, including those for 1999, but the numbers taking the examination are too small to be statistically reliable. Teachers' assessments for the end of Key Stage 3, show that about 80 per cent of the pupils attain the expected standard or higher each year. Standards of work seen during the inspection are similar to the results of examinations and assessments. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations and above expectations for the end of Key Stage 4 and for the sixth form. Similarly, most pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3 and good progress at post 14 but pupils with special educational needs, at Key Stage 3, mostly make unsatisfactory progress.
175. At Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils develop sufficient electronic keyboard skills for workshop use. They know and understand the sounds that different acoustic instruments make and they use them successfully in their compositions. Skills of pitch, rhythm and meter are generally in line with expectations. In a number of lessons skills of pulse are less well developed and pupils find it difficult to keep in time without help. Pupils perform to their classmates with confidence, usually demonstrating their group compositions. Composing skills are consistently developed through the key stage and pupils have good understanding of compositional device. For example, pupils from a Year 8 class were successfully exploring the use of ground bass to provide a formal structure for their melodic compositions. Standards of singing are satisfactory and pupils sing in a variety of contexts. They sing as a whole class, in groups and, when they are composing, as soloists. The singing is usually in tune and in time, but little part-singing was seen during the inspection. Pupils with special educational needs work mostly on electronic keyboards or at written tasks to extend their knowledge about music. The tasks are not always appropriate for their prior attainment and some lessons do not provide sufficient musical experience for all pupils to ensure satisfactory progress.
176. At Key Stage 4, pupils compose, perform and listen to a good standard. They make good progress and some, particularly those with special educational needs, achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. In one Year 10 lesson, for example, boys who are having additional support for special educational needs were improvising on keyboards to a 'Blues' structure. The work was of a high standard in terms of understanding melodic, harmonic and formal structures and their success was giving great pleasure to all of the boys in the class. At 'A' level, the students demonstrate good understanding of style, form and harmony. In a lesson analysing a movement from the Schumann Piano Quintet, the students made clear and perceptive contributions, showing firm understanding and a good knowledge base. In their written work, standards of composition were broadly in line with course expectations.
177. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards and the numbers taking part in music at Key Stage 4 have generally improved. The provision for information technology at Key Stage 3 is still unsatisfactory. While there are now facilities for recording in the music rooms, they are far from ideal. The provision for information technology post 14 is now sufficient and it is used well.
178. The quality of teaching for most pupils is satisfactory at Key Stage 3. There are some examples of good teaching, but the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. A significant proportion of lessons seen during the inspection were unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the quality of teaching is very good. All teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, which enables them to provide good and effective technical support. In good and very good lessons, teachers clearly identify, in their planning, the learning aims for different levels of attainment in the class. Expectations are high and the lessons are rigorous and demanding of pupils, who enjoy the intellectual stimulation. As a result pupils, of all levels of attainment, work hard and gain satisfaction from their achievements as they develop skills and understanding in music. Some lessons, including those where teaching is unsatisfactory, are not well planned and formative assessments are not used consistently well to inform planning. The content and strategies for these lessons are planned, but learning aims are not well identified from assessments in previous work and there are no different aims for the groups in the class. Consequently, pupils are not clear about how to improve. Teachers do not work to the school literacy strategy, but support the development of literacy skills when opportunities occur. While the strategy is satisfactory it could be more effective if the whole school approach was adopted. In most lessons, relationships and control are good and pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Pupils are usually well behaved and always ready to learn.

179. Standards of learning are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good in lessons for post 14 groups. The boys apply themselves well to practical tasks and most sustain their concentration for extended periods. Pupils support each other very well in music lessons and co-operation in group work is good. In most lessons, at all key stages, pupils make their own musical decisions and take responsibility for their work. In lessons for pupils with special educational needs, however, teachers' have insufficient knowledge and understanding about the learning needs of the pupils in music and progress is constrained. There is too often a mismatch between tasks set and pupils' prior attainment. At other times strategies are inappropriate. For example, pupils continue with a task for an extended period that is too long for their attention span or they are engaged in activities that do not focus sufficiently on musical development.
180. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, but provision for information technology at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. There are good opportunities for pupils to extend their musical experiences in extra-curricular activities. Each week there are rehearsals for a Vocal Group, Orchestra, Wind Band, Swing Band, String and Brass Ensembles and a variety of different instrumental groups. About seven per cent of pupils have instrumental lessons. However, there is insufficient opportunity for those pupils with limited instrumental experience to take part in ensemble playing at a more basic level within the school context. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development through its activities and in some lessons. For example, in one lesson for Year 9 pupils were composing 'Protest' songs. They had chosen topics that they felt strongly about, and were performing work of high quality to the rest of the class. Some very powerful messages were given to a reflective group of boys, who listened with full attention throughout.
181. Management of the subject is satisfactory and the department functions well on a day to day basis. The schemes of work and most of the planning documents are of good quality and provide a useful framework for teachers' planning. Monitoring of the subject is unsatisfactory at all levels and some teachers are rarely monitored. On a number of issues, the department and the senior management team of the school are not working together in the most effective partnership to support pupils' progress. This results in significant weaknesses in development planning, the implementation of literacy strategies, the allocation of non-contact time, the contribution of the bands and orchestras to the life of the school and the management of change.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

182. Standards in physical education are well above expectations and the subject is one of the strengths of the school.
183. Since the previous inspection in 1995 examination results in physical education have improved significantly. GCSE results for the past three years have been well above the national average. In 1999, nearly three quarters of boys gained A*-C grades, with just under half achieving the highest A*/A grades, three times the national proportion. GCSE physical education is a very popular option, and the take up is well above the national figure. Comparison of results shows that, in 1999, boys' performance in physical education was significantly higher than in their other GCSE subjects. This, together with the well above average standards, represents high achievement for the pupils concerned. In the sixth form A-level physical education is well established, and an above average proportion of students take the course. Here, also, results since the previous inspection are above average and improving. In 1999, all students successfully passed the examination, with one third gaining A or B grades, which is well above the national proportion. Again, this represents high achievement for the students concerned.
184. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are average overall, and pupils' achievement is good. A high proportion of boys are achieving expected standards in their activities, including those with special educational needs. Standards in games and swimming are above average, and are average in gymnastics. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are similarly average overall, with football and swimming considerably above average. Those boys who have chosen to take GCSE physical education reach standards which are well above average in both theory and practical work. In the sixth form, standards are above average.
185. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, and is now good overall. At Key Stage 3, teaching is satisfactory. Subject knowledge and understanding are very secure. Lessons are effectively structured, although occasionally slow to get underway. More opportunities are required at this stage to engage pupils in the planning and evaluation of their work in games activities, whilst in gymnastics there is insufficient emphasis given to the quality of pupils' performance. For example, in

Year 7 when working on balancing and rotation. Teaching at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is good, and is particularly effective in examination work because expectation and pace are strong features. The most successful teaching combines strong subject knowledge with excellent pupil management skills, high expectation of pupils' response, and well timed intervention and feedback to promote learning. This was the case, for example in Year 10 swimming, Year 11 basketball, Year 10 GCSE swimming and tennis, and Year 12 A-level work on skill acquisition and learning theory. The pupils involved in these lessons were notably on task, engaged by the work presented, took responsibility for their own learning, and made good progress. Across the school relationships and discipline are strong. Effective use is made of homework in examination classes to reinforce and extend learning, but there is insufficient use made of information technology and the marking of work does not provide enough guidance for improvement. Teaching was unsatisfactory in two lessons in Key Stage 4, because there was insufficient planned input from teachers, and the recreational emphasis resulted in unsatisfactory progress and learning.

186. Learning and the pupils' rate of progress in physical education is good overall, including for those pupils with special educational needs. In Key Stage 4 achievement and progress is notably good for pupils taking the GCSE course, because good teaching combines with a well planned course and to ensure pupils learn effectively. Motivation is generally high for GCSE pupils, and for A-level students in the sixth form where progress and achievement are also good.
187. Pupils are very cooperative and behave well in their lessons. Attitudes are very positive, and levels of interest and enthusiasm are frequently very high. Participation rates are good, and boys have good learning skills. They show strong commitment, work hard in their activities, listen to advice from teachers and apply it effectively to improve their skills. Collaborative work is good, and in examination work, many show a mature approach to their studies.
188. Subject leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection, and are now satisfactory. Curriculum planning has improved at Key Stage 3, and the requirements of the National Curriculum are properly covered. However, arrangements in Key Stage 4 are inappropriate and require improvement. There is insufficient opportunity for pupils' choice and specialisation. At present lessons do not always include enough structured, progressive teaching and learning. Overall progress is slow because GCSE pupils are taught as a separate group, rather than being integrated into the various activities. Documentation, including schemes of work and planning for development, is now in place and is satisfactory. Further work is needed on the recently introduced assessment process to ensure that pupils' progress in physical education is effectively tracked throughout the school. In addition, there is need to develop formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching to ensure consistency in these areas.
189. Facilities for physical education are good overall, although changing accommodation is poor and examination work suffers from the lack of a dedicated classroom base to promote subject identity and provide appropriate storage of records and class materials. Resources are sufficient and appropriate in the main but gymnastic equipment is outdated and requires improvement. Examination work is satisfactorily resourced, although library provision for the subject is not extensive. Staff are well qualified, and hardworking, and specialist provision is good. In addition to their curricular roles and responsibilities, they provide an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities, including house competitions, which are popular and very well supported. There is welcome assistance in this from non-specialist colleagues, and from good links with outside sports clubs and other agencies. This provision enhances and extends the physical education curriculum, and enables a significant number of pupils to participate, with some achieving very high standards as individuals, and within their teams.
190. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. In addition to improved examination results and stronger teaching, the school has sustained its commitment to both curricular and extra-curricular provision. Leadership and management has been strengthened, and the department has tackled the weaknesses identified in the previous report with general success.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

191. Standards in religious education are in line with expectations at all stages. The subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. There are concerns about the contribution the subject is able to make to pupils' overall educational experiences.
192. No external examinations or tests are taken in religious education at the present time. At the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and the sixth form, standards in work seen are in line with expected

levels. In individual lessons, pupils can make satisfactory progress, but the limited amount of work covered restricts the standards actually reached. Achievement across the school is satisfactory. In their work, most pupils show literacy levels above expected levels, especially in speaking at Key Stage 3, though the total amount of writing is limited. There is little evidence of the use of numeracy, and the use of computers is insufficient to make judgements on standards attained.

193. At Key Stage 3, there are thoughtful ideas and good illustrations from most pupils about the Noble Eightfold Path in their work on Buddhism, and some very sensitive comments following their meditation in one lesson. Across the ability range, pupils demonstrate achievement in their information booklets on churches, showing a good understanding of the main features of different churches. There is mature work and high achievement in the best accounts which analyse Paul's description of love in terms of what it means to individuals. Many pupils can also write thoughtful accounts of their personal beliefs. Whilst many can successfully reflect on the topics, the reflective writing of lower attainers shows little depth. For example, their descriptions of their own special places is done at a superficial level. Pupils with special educational needs tend to write more limited responses. Overall their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their ability.
194. Pupils' achievements at Key Stage 4 are variable between different modules and reflect directly the quality of teaching. When given the opportunity, many pupils can express articulate opinions on a wide range of topics. Higher achievers can recall details and nuances of the Easter story in Mark's and Matthew's gospels, and understand the concepts of literal and symbolic interpretations. When well taught, pupils approach the study of important moral and social issues seriously and sensitively. However, some pupils contribute little to discussions and some paired work is at a mundane level. Overall, the amount of written work is limited. Work is more often related to moral and social issues with little analysis of the religious aspects of the course. In the sixth form, students take a short course that considers Jesus as a person and a religious leader and challenges conventional views about the historical Jesus. They develop their thinking at a high intellectual level and achieve standards in the time available that are appropriate.
195. The subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. There have been some improvements. There is now a better balance at Key Stage 3 between the time spent on the different aspects of the subject. The reflective and spiritual aspects are now given appropriate emphasis at Key Stage 3, and there are some notably good examples of the contribution to pupils' spiritual development. At the time of the previous inspection, no religious education was taught in the sixth form. Although the time is not sufficient to cover the Agreed Syllabus requirements, all sixth formers now experience a short but valuable course. However, there has been no improvement in the allocation of time for the subject at Key Stages 3 and 4. Although the programme of study follows topics in the Agreed Syllabus, they are not studied in sufficient depth as only about half the recommended time is given to religious education. At Key Stage 4, some teachers lack the expertise or confidence to deliver some aspects of the course and there is insufficient emphasis on religious perspectives in many of the modules.
196. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3, satisfactory at Key Stage 4, and good in the sixth form. No teaching is less than satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and it is occasionally very good. Whilst some teaching at Key Stage 4 is good, some is also unsatisfactory. In most Key Stage 3 lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge which promotes good discussion. For example, when pupils consider details of the Buddhist faith and of the symbolism in religion. Pupils learn well when teachers prepare carefully, maintain good relationships and behaviour in the classroom and lessons have a sense of purpose. In one very good lesson, a quiet atmosphere was very successfully created, which then led to a period of meditation. Through the use of music and the teacher's own words, pupils developed their spirituality in a calm, contemplative mood. In some other lessons, timing and pace are not sharp enough, and teacher led discussion lacks rigour. This results in pupils' progress and learning being adversely affected. The pace of learning also drops when there are lengthy sections of lessons when teachers are talking. In these cases, pupils' attention often wavers as their concentration drops.
197. At Key Stage 4, most lessons are well planned and prepared, with a sound balance between input by the teacher and opportunities for active learning by pupils. Resources, including overhead transparencies, newspaper articles and video, are well used by many teachers and this promotes learning. In one very effective lesson, for example, calm, sensitive teaching created a good atmosphere for serious consideration of the Jews in Nazi Germany. This led to a discussion of why so many people, both inside and outside Germany, did not object to what was happening. In some lessons, discussion is too rushed for its full potential to be realised. Some lessons are too dominated

by the teacher because the teacher talks too much or because pupils are passive recipients of information. Sometimes, poor classroom management and undemanding tasks reduce the quality of learning, and also reduce the seriousness with which pupils treat some important social issues. In the sixth form, very good teacher knowledge highlights key points, and the high intellectual content provokes thinking and learning.

198. Overall, the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, though its potential contribution is reduced by the lack of time given to the subject. On a day to day basis, the subject is well led, with the head of subject giving clear direction. However, there are some major weaknesses. The lack of time means that the statutory requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are not met at any stage. Staffing arrangements are unsatisfactory. The head of subject spends only a small proportion of her time teaching the subject. This means that she cannot make a full contribution to raising standards. The time allocated to religious education is distributed among eight teachers, none of whom is a full time teacher of the subject. This limits the amount of time they have to contribute to the development of the subject. There are no effective ways at present for the senior management team to monitor the quality of teaching or provision. There is one good teaching room for religious education, but only a small proportion of religious education is taught there. The limited amount of dedicated accommodation creates problems for using resources and standards are adversely affected. The lack of a coherent area for teaching the subject also sends negative messages to pupils about the value placed on the subject. The governors and senior management team of the school have no clear overall vision for the subject and development planning is poor.