

INSPECTION REPORT

WADHAM COMMUNITY SCHOOL

CREWKERNE

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number:123893

Headteacher: Mr A Preston

Reporting inspector: Mr M Pavey
17650

Dates of inspection: 10-14 January 2000

Inspection number: 186418

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:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	13 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Hutchings
Date of previous inspection:	27 November 1995

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			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
John Kerr	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mary Cureton	Team inspector	English	
		Special educational needs	
Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Science	
Edward Little	Team inspector		Community links
David Morris	Team inspector	Art	
		Music	
Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Design and technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wadham Community School is a 13-18 voluntary controlled Church of England comprehensive upper school of 774 boys and girls, including 181 in the sixth form. It serves the towns of Crewkerne and Ilminster and the surrounding rural areas. The overall attainment of students on entry to the school is just below average. One hundred and fourteen students have special educational needs, a proportion less than the national average. Fewer than one per cent of students are from ethnic minority backgrounds and only five students have English as an additional language. Twenty six students are entitled to free school meals, well below the national average, although the area served by the school is somewhat below average in socio-economic terms.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a successful school which achieves good results and makes a good overall provision for its students. Effective teaching in almost all areas leads to good standards, progress and attitudes from students. The school is well led by an effective headteacher, senior staff and governors who know the school well and work together purposefully. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Results are good, at all levels.
- English, mathematics and science are strong subjects and provide a good core to the curriculum.
- Teaching is good in almost all subjects.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff leads to good standards. Governors are very committed to the school, give good direction for the school and work well with senior staff.
- There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities, part of the school's successful provision for students' social development.
- Links with the community and partner institutions are very good and increase students' opportunities for good learning.
- Links with parents are very effective.
- The sixth form is popular and successful. Sixth formers play a positive part in the school.
- Careers education is very good.

What could be improved

- Facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) are poorly provided. The school is not providing the required curriculum for those not taking ICT as a separate subject in Key Stage 4, so that these students make unsatisfactory progress in ICT skills.
- Standards in art are unsatisfactory, particularly for boys in Key Stage 4.
- Across the curriculum, the lack of a policy for teaching literacy is holding back the progress of students with special educational needs, and the lack of a policy for numeracy is restricting the development of this aspect, for all students.
- Students with individual education plans (IEPs) need better targets for improvement, in all subjects, to help their further improvement.
- Sixth formers miss too many lessons, because of timetable problems.
- Some unsatisfactory behaviour persists, particularly in Key Stage 3, affecting students' progress.
- Teachers' marking of students' work does not always give them a clear idea of how they can improve, so that some opportunities to make progress are lessened.
- There is rather too much teacher time given to the sixth form and not enough to Key Stages 3 and 4, so that there are some over-large sets at these stages.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in January 1996. Teaching has improved considerably. There is now much less unsatisfactory teaching and far more which is good or very good. This has led to further improvements in results in GCSE, A level and vocational

subjects in the sixth form. The effectiveness of the school's leadership has further improved. Its introduction of a team review procedure for departments and years has greatly helped to improve teaching. The sixth form curriculum has further improved, as have A level results and sixth form numbers. The school has successfully tackled several key issues from the last inspection report, but several others need more attention. These include the poor behaviour of a minority of students and timetable issues. Senior staff and governors are clearly aware of the need to continue to improve the school's already good standards and are well placed to do so.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Note : throughout this report, 'similar schools' refer to schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key Stage 3 tests	A	B	B	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	C	
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	B		

The school achieves results above average at all levels, and adds value to achievement in GCSE. Results have improved in recent years. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science, results in 1999 and over a three year period were above average. GCSE results were well above average, in 1999 and over three years. In 1999, A level results were above average; over three years they were well above.

The school's results in Key Stage 3 tests are below the average for similar schools, and those in GCSE are average. This is explained by the very low number of students eligible for free school meals in this school. However, social circumstances are average, and are not favoured as the free meals figure might suggest.

The school set and achieved a demanding target for its GCSE results in 1999. For 2000, the target is equally rigorous, as the school now intends to improve results in grades A*-G, so challenging the whole ability range.

The core subjects of English, mathematics and science together make a very positive contribution to the school's standards. All subjects except art achieve at least average results in GCSE. Comparing GCSE performances in 1999, students in geography did best, followed by design technology, mathematics and English literature. Students in art did worst, followed by history and French, and to a lesser extent by ICT.

Generally, students achieve well in their lessons. Standards seen in the inspection were either in line with or above the expected levels, with the exception of art at Key Stages 3 and 4, where boys were doing poorly, and ICT across the curriculum at Key Stage 4, where not enough experience or equipment is provided.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall, but attitudes in Year 9 and a few Key Stage 4 classes are not always positive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory on balance. Good in many classes, unsatisfactory in a few.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Students and staff get on well.
Attendance	Satisfactory, around the national average.

Generally, students like and value their school. When they join in Year 9, their attitudes and behaviour are variable - good on the whole, but uncooperative in a minority of lessons. Both improve in Key Stage 4, and by the sixth form attitudes and behaviour are very good. Sixth formers are concerned to help, and play a very positive part in the house system. Their own personal development and relationships are good, and those of most other students improve as they reach Key Stage 4. Attendance is average and punctuality good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching is good overall. 94 per cent is satisfactory or better. 69 per cent is at least good, a high figure. 15 per cent is very good. 5 per cent is unsatisfactory and 1 per cent poor. Students generally learn well. The great majority enjoy their lessons and make good progress. A small minority of lessons is affected by poor behaviour.

In English, teaching is almost all good or very good. Most teaching in mathematics is satisfactory, but is good in the sixth form. Teaching in all science subjects is good and often very good. Teaching is good in all other subjects with the exception of art in Key Stages 3 and 4, where it is unsatisfactory, and ICT across the curriculum in Key Stage 4. Good teaching gets a positive response and good results.

Teaching has many strengths - good subject knowledge, high expectations, effective methods and good management of students. There are no unsatisfactory aspects, but planning, assessment and use of homework are not as strong. Literacy skills are well taught, but a policy is needed, especially to help those with special needs. Numeracy is well taught, but again a policy is needed to increase effective teaching across subjects.

The school provides for special needs well in its specialist teaching, but teachers in mainstream classes need to set clearer targets, especially for those with IEPs. The needs of all other students are well met.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum has a wide choice of subjects and these are well balanced. The sixth form curriculum offers good choice. Provision for ICT does not meet requirements for all students in Key Stage 4.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Specialist provision is good, but not all subjects provide work which reflects students' individual targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good for the few students concerned, who make good progress in their work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. There is a good pastoral system and a well designed course in life education. Provision for students' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory; that for moral development is good and that for social development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Monitoring of students' academic performance and behaviour is satisfactory. Procedures for ensuring their welfare are good.

The school works very well with its parents. It provides good information and has very good links with parents.

There are strengths in extra-curricular activities, careers education, links with the community and in relationships with partner schools. All these aspects make a very positive contribution to students' wider education. There are weaknesses in the way the school organises the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior staff provide effective leadership, informed by a clear grasp of detail.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Committees are very well led. Governors are well informed about the academic performance of students.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are well developed systems for reviewing the work of departments and for setting targets for individual students. The school development plan works well.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The overall use of resources is well planned, but there are some problems in the allocation of teachers to the different years.

Staffing and accommodation are adequate for the curriculum. Learning resources are adequate with the exception of computers. Access to ICT is a major issue.

The strengths of the school's leadership are in the good leadership of the headteacher, senior staff and governors, and the very good liaison between them. There are effective systems for monitoring performance. There are no weaknesses in the school's leadership, and none in its management

except the provision of ICT. This has not been helped by some major cuts in funding and a lack of space for any further suites of computers.

The school applies the principles of best value well in its financial planning and its major decisions of policy. It consults with its partners - staff, parents, students, other schools - well and takes well informed decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects students to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is well led and managed. • Teaching is good and students make good progress. • It is easy to approach the school, which responds well to concerns. • The school helps students to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority feels that students do not get the right amount of homework, though the parents' meeting considered this good. • Some parents do not feel they are well informed about their child's progress or that the school works closely with them. • In questionnaires, a minority feels that behaviour is not good. However, in the meeting, parents felt it had improved a lot.

The team agrees with the positive views of parents. The school has strengths in its communication with parents and the community, and the meeting of parents felt that the school was very approachable. Inspectors agree that there is some poor behaviour, often in Year 9, and that the school works hard to improve it. Homework is satisfactory overall.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Throughout this report, 'similar schools' refer to schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.

1. When students join the school at the age of thirteen, their overall attainment is just below the national average, seen in the results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 and other nationally validated tests of ability. Results in the national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 were together above the national average in terms of points scored, both in 1999 and in the three years 1997-99. Science results were highest, being well above average over the three years; English results were above average and mathematics close to average. Over the three years taken together, boys and girls have performed exactly alike in relation to their performances nationally, but girls' results have fallen over the period. This, particularly in English, has caused the school's results to decline over the period. The school has contested the English results for 1999, which do not reflect its data on students' attainment in that year or past departmental results.

2. Assessments made by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 judge students above average in design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. They are in line with the average in music, physical education and, for girls, in art. They are just below average in information and communication technology (ICT) and well below average for boys in art.

3. Results in the GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4 have been rising rapidly in terms of achievement for five or more passes at grades A*-C, and were nearly 60 per cent in 1999, well above the national average. Over three years, passes at this level have been above average. Achievement for five or more grades A*-G were close to the average in 1999 and above average over three years. The overall points scored in 1999 and over three years were well above average. Girls have performed more strongly than boys in GCSE, both in 1999 and over three years. Their results were well above average while boys' results were above. The increase in passes at grades A*-C in recent years has not been matched by a similar rise in points scored.

4. Most subjects have achieved results above or well above average at grades A*-C in GCSE in recent years. French and history results have been around average, while art results have been well below. Results in most subjects at grades A*-C have risen strongly in recent years. Those in geography, music and drama have risen considerably, while those in art have risen modestly. History results show no clear trend, while French results have been erratic. German results, though well above average, have fallen. The only subject to cause concern at GCSE is art. In 1999, girls did better than average and boys worse. This has been caused mainly by the narrow curriculum, based largely on painting and drawing, which has clearly not appealed to boys. All students must take a practical arts subject, but by contrast boys' performance in drama in 1999 was higher than girls'.

5. When the 1999 GCSE performance in any one subject is compared with the performance of the same students in other subjects and further adjusted in the light of national performances, students in geography did best, followed by design technology, mathematics and English literature. Students in art did worst, followed by history and French, and to a lesser extent by ICT.

6. At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, comparison is made with results in similar

schools. This is calculated on the number of students known to be eligible for free school meals, which generally gives a good comparison of social need and academic potential between schools. In this school, results are below those of similar schools in tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, and in line with similar schools for GCSE results. These results are achieved because the free school meals numbers are very low at this school, putting it in the category of least social need. In fact, the school's area is a little below the average in socio-economic terms. The school adds value to its results between the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, measured by local authority statistics, and results are at least as good as they should be.

7. Results in GCE A level at the end of the sixth form were above the national average in points scored in 1999 and well above over the last three years. In 1999, almost all subjects achieved above average results at grades A and B, and overall results were above those achieved nationally in these grades. There was a particularly strong performance in design and technology. Art, geography and mathematics also did well. The art department had good success at this level and all candidates passed this subject. All passed also in chemistry, design and technology, English, geography, mathematics, music, physics and theatre studies. Overall results were at their highest level in 1997, when they leapt a full eight points, but have maintained above-average scores in the last two years. Results in sixth form vocational subjects are in line with the national average at intermediate level and a little above at advanced level, with a high proportion of merits and distinctions in health and social care and a strong performance in business. In 1999, all candidates passed at the GNVQ advanced level. Vocational results have been improving in recent years. Numbers taking both GCE and GNVQ A level have increased to their highest yet in 1999.

8. Standards of literacy are good in all areas of the school. Students listen well and develop good oral skills. They read effectively. Although presentation is neat, students do not have enough opportunity in school to use ICT to present their writing. Most students speak with reasonable clarity. Though the lack of a policy in literacy does not inhibit good standards, the absence of a numeracy policy is holding back potential progress. At the moment, there has been no audit of numeracy skills across all departments and its development across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Most subjects make only a small contribution to numeracy.

9. Skills in information and communication technology are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 because the subject is taught to all students in separate lessons. However, they get little practice in other subjects because ICT facilities are too restricted. There is a GCSE course at Key Stage 4, but students not taking it get too little experience of ICT and do not make the progress they should. National Curriculum requirements are not met at this stage. Some sixth formers have a good basis of ICT skills, often those who have taken the GCSE course, but others do not, and there is not enough experience for all students at this level.

10. Standards of work seen towards the end of the key stages are generally in line with the results in tests and examinations. Standards are good in all core subjects. Together, standards in these subjects are a strength of the school, and make a very positive contribution to the good quality of the school's achievements. In English at Key Stage 3, students already have an effective range of skills. At Key Stage 4, they pay close attention to the literary quality of a text, and their writing is now generally fluent and largely free of error. In the sixth form, students cooperate effectively in the strong development of critical skills. In mathematics at Key Stage 3, students acquire good problem solving skills and sound use of number. At Key Stage 4 the highest attainers are competent in such aspects as indices, while almost all others reach or exceed the levels appropriate for them. Sixth formers reach very high levels in applied mathematics. Their standards in pure

mathematics are good, though they find this subject more difficult. In science, students have high standards at Key Stage 3, where they already conduct investigations with competence. These standards are maintained at Key Stage 4, where there has been a significant rise in achievement in classwork and examination results in recent years. There are good standards in sixth form science subjects.

11. In their work in other subjects, ICT across the curriculum and art at Key Stages 3 and 4 excepted, students' standards towards the end of the key stages and sixth form are in line with or above expected levels. There are strengths in design technology, geography, drama and the GCSE course in ICT.

12. Standards at all levels for the very few students from ethnic minority backgrounds and for those with English as an additional language are the same as for all other students. No student is in fact held back by any difficulties with English as an additional language. Boys and girls attain equally at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Both boys and girls attain more highly than nationally in GCSE. However, girls' results were well above average in 1999 and for the three years to 1999, while boys' results were above average.

13. Students with special educational needs achieve results in line with their abilities. They acquire new knowledge and skills at a satisfactory pace, and sometimes they do well. All students with special needs can sustain concentration for a reasonable time, and on occasion develop ideas and think for themselves. As a result of careful target setting within the special needs department, all know what they must do to improve. However, despite the considerable expertise of the coordinator and support staff, students make no more than satisfactory progress over their time at Key Stages 3 and 4, while all other students make generally good progress. Major problems with written presentation persist because ICT is not readily available, suitable targets are not set for students in all departments, and the lack of a policy for literacy and numeracy across all subjects means that teachers do not have a coordinated way to improve such aspects as spelling and presentation.

14. Gifted and talented students generally make good progress. They thrive in top sets and benefit from the very good range of activities provided. They make good progress in the sixth form, achieving a high number of passes at grades A and B.

15. Generally, students achieve well. They join the school with an overall attainment just below average, but make good progress at all stages to achieve results above the national average. This is because they are well taught and challenged by staff who know their subjects and ensure that students make good progress in knowledge, understanding and skills. This leads to increasingly good behaviour and attitudes to work. The quality of their learning and progress improves with each key stage. These are very good in 14 per cent of all lessons, good in half, satisfactory in 30 per cent and unsatisfactory in six per cent. The great majority of unsatisfactory learning and progress occurs in Year 9, often caused by unhelpful behaviour. Progress is assured and purposeful in the sixth form, from which 65 per cent of students went into further or higher education in 1998.

16. The school set itself a target of 59 per cent of GCSE passes at grades A*-C for 1999. This was a demanding figure, over five per cent higher than previous achievements. It met and just exceeded this. For 2000, the target is 55 per cent. This is appropriate and challenging enough, based on a detailed analysis of the potential of the present Year 11. Targets for passes at grades A*-G are very challenging for 2000, considerably higher than previously achieved. This reflects the school's desire to get everyone worthwhile qualifications, its policy of providing relevant alternative qualifications for some students, and an increasing confidence in its ability to analyse and predict performance; also to take

positive action to support students who need further help. If the school can reach its A*-G target, it can also reach its goal to achieve an average points score of 45 - a little higher than previously achieved - in a year with less predicted success at top grades.

17. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its previous high standards of attainment and has improved its results in GCSE, A level and GNVQ examinations. The attainment of students with special educational needs has risen. Previously, there was substantial under-achievement in presentation and spelling, and though there are still weaknesses, the position has improved. The previous good quality of students' learning has also improved. There is a higher proportion of good learning and progress, at all levels.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Students are keen to take part in school activities. Their enthusiasm for what the school provides grows as they mature, and by the time they reach the sixth form, students show initiative and take an active part in helping with school activities.

19. Students' attitudes to their school are good and most enjoy coming. They are punctual at the start of the day and keen to work. They listen well to each other and respond to good teaching, at all stages. Students participate in the wide range of activities offered; for example, over 40 per cent are involved in extra-curricular sport. Students' attitudes are varied at Key Stage 3, where for some they depend on the nature of the activity and the ability of the teacher to control them. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, students are serious about their work, responding well to challenging work. Although they are somewhat dependent on their teachers, they are keen to do well.

20. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory. For the most part, students are well behaved. They are polite to each other and to adults. The behaviour policy has a good moral base which is known by all students. There is, however a significant minority of students, mainly at Key Stage 3, that has a negative attitude to the principles of good behaviour. These students have a strong influence and can disrupt the life of the school and the flow of learning, even in well taught classes. The rate of temporary exclusion has remained static over the last few years. Permanent exclusions have fallen. There were 32 fixed period exclusions involving 23 students last year. Only one boy was permanently excluded. Exclusions are carefully monitored by the senior management and the governing body. There are well managed procedures including special timetables for students in danger of being excluded. Parents are involved at an early stage and in most cases add to the support given. The main causes for exclusion are for violent or abusive behaviour. There were no cases of drugs abuse or violence to staff.

21. In the upper school students are very active in the life and organisation of the school. Sixth formers organise the house system and provide listening help to junior students as well as advice for students about to join the sixth form. At all key stages most students are very capable in using their work planners intelligently to organise their studies.

22. Students' personal development and relationships are satisfactory. As they mature, students become more confident and form good relationships with each other and with their teachers. In the sixth form, they are friendly and respectful to their tutors and teachers. Students with special educational needs integrate well with their classmates and are often well supported by them. However, some students at Key Stage 3 are slow to form good relationships with teachers, though they demonstrate good cooperation in group activities. In PE for instance while planning work they respected and listened to each other's points of view. On the other hand, in life education, the guidance lessons given by tutors,

participation is not always willing, particularly in discussions. In lessons and around school, the atmosphere is generally positive, and students have the freedom to work in conditions free from bullying and oppressive behaviour. Students report that staff are quick to deal with any incidents of bullying. The behaviour of a small minority can sometimes be oppressive, despite all the staff and senior students do to counter this.

23. Attendance is satisfactory and is broadly in line with the national average. There has been a slight but continuing improvement in attendance over the last few years. Parents are supportive of the school's efforts to maintain good attendance and report reasons for non-attendance in almost all cases.

24. Students with special educational needs are mostly eager to come to school and are involved in the full range of activities. Some attend a session of welfare activities in the learning support area four times a week. Their behaviour is good and they form constructive relationships with teachers and their peers. They are good at taking responsibility for their course work in external examinations.

25. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its generally good standards of behaviour. However, there are still pockets of unsociable behaviour, often in Year 9, which disrupt learning. The aggressive behaviour reported in 1995 has been reduced by some determined action by the school, but remains a problem among some students. Two thirds of the fixed term exclusions in the last twelve months were related to behaviour which the school, in seeking to improve it, regarded as unacceptable.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. Teaching is of good quality at all stages. Overall, 15 per cent of teaching is very good, 54 per cent good, 25 per cent satisfactory, five per cent unsatisfactory and one per cent poor. There is more unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4 and no unsatisfactory teaching in the sixth form. There is good teaching in all subjects. What makes it successful is teachers' good subject knowledge which leads to high expectations in most areas. Teaching methods and the management of students grow more effective with each key stage. Practical activities almost always produce keen learning and good results. The only subject in which teaching is unsatisfactory on balance is art, which is ineffective at Key Stages 3 and 4, although good in the sixth form. The problem lies not with the knowledge or management skills of the teachers, but with the curriculum and the design of the rooms, which produce an unenthusiastic response from younger students. Elsewhere, unsatisfactory teaching was not confined to any particular subject, and three of the seven unsatisfactory lessons were taught by temporary staff or those teaching outside their specialist areas. These lessons were often linked to a lack of sure management of behaviour.

27. The overall quality of teaching is very good in English and science. It is good in design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography, music, PE, religion and philosophy, drama and vocational subjects. It is good also in the specialist teaching of the special needs and ICT departments, though teaching of these subjects across other subjects is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall in mathematics, though there are many good lessons and teaching is good in the sixth form.

28. In English, teaching is entirely satisfactory and almost all is good or very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject which they use to inspire and challenge students. Students therefore learn well, enjoy their lessons and get good results. Most teaching in mathematics is satisfactory. Teaching in around one third of lessons is

good, particularly in the sixth form. There is, however, a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in lower years. All teachers of mathematics are well informed and have good subject knowledge. This enables students to acquire good knowledge themselves. Sometimes, a lack of imagination results in poor behaviour which prevents satisfactory progress. In science, teaching in all subjects is good and most frequently very good. As a result, students have a very positive attitude to science. Planning is meticulous and lessons always include adventurous experimental work.

29. In subjects generally, teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding. They present and discuss their subjects with insight into their variety and applications. For example, a Year 13 French lesson was much enhanced by the teacher's very good knowledge of the language which gave students the confidence to speak with interest and certainty. In a Year 9 science lesson on energy, the teacher's clear knowledge of the subject and the goals required of students led to sure and rapid progress, good behaviour and eager concentration.

30. Teachers have a good technical competence in teaching the basic skills, though this ability is not as widely used in numeracy and ICT across the curriculum as it should be. When used, for example in ICT and special needs lessons taught by specialists, teachers have good competence. In ICT, for example, students gained from the command of the teacher in a GCSE lesson, which gave a good focus for their choice of business organisation for their special project. Reading skills are well taught and reinforced, both in the special needs department and in English, where lessons often begin with silent reading. In a Year 9 special needs lesson, the teacher had very good communication skills and helped students to gain confidence in their own command of language, which improved rapidly during the lesson. Outside mathematics, numeracy skills are not much taught and this restricts students' progress on some occasions. For example, students in a Year 9 history lesson took three times as long as they should have on a simple exercise because they could not subtract without using a calculator. Teachers are not particularly encouraged to teach the skills of numeracy, across the curriculum.

31. Teachers' planning is generally satisfactory, sometimes good, as for example in a Year 11 drama lesson when students were enabled to work confidently through their chosen scripts and to make good progress in the time available. Sometimes, teachers' satisfactory planning makes possible an otherwise difficult situation, as in a high set in Year 10 mathematics, when the teacher's relevant plan and approach succeeded in getting the interest of a difficult and over-large class.

32. The level of challenge is often high, and much is expected of the students, for example in a Year 13 geography lesson on Taiwan when the teacher's enthusiasm and pace raised expectations and challenged students to think for themselves. In a Year 11 lesson in religion and philosophy, the teacher made a revision task into a challenging session by setting tight time limits and requiring that students focus on the important aspects.

33. Teaching methods are almost always effective. For example, a Year 9 class grew rapidly in their confidence in handling Shakespeare's language because the teacher used a relevant, practical task - writing a witness statement - to involve students in the action of *Romeo and Juliet*. In a Year 13 design and technology lesson, the teacher enabled all students to learn effectively, introducing a new topic with good examples of work, supported by useful booklets on the course.

34. Usually, teachers manage students well, achieving good behaviour and motivation.

This is always the case in PE, for example in two Year 9 lessons seen. In the girls' badminton lesson, very good management of all stages of the lesson led to very purposeful, helpful behaviour and a good atmosphere in the lesson. The boys' football lesson succeeded because the teacher had good control of all aspects of the session, so that students responded positively to his clear expectations and management. In a small number of lessons, particularly in Year 9, teachers do not manage behaviour well. In a few others, though teachers have adequate skills of management, students' behaviour is too poor for any gains to be made.

35. In most respects, teachers make good use of resources, for example in their use of relevant texts, apparatus and support staff. When ICT resources are available, teachers use them well and students benefit from the extra support they give. However, it is difficult to get enough access to ICT and its use is therefore limited in most subjects.

36. Teachers' assessment of students' work is satisfactory overall. It is good in the sixth form, where some good examples of detailed, helpful marking were seen. Generally, however, teachers' marking is not good at suggesting positive ways in which students can improve their work. For example, some drama books at Key Stage 4 were very thinly marked, while others showed real interest in helping the students to develop the quality of their work. Standards vary between departments. For example, assessment is very good in science, where it provides a real stimulus to students' progress. It is careful and well used to help students in English. However, there are some weaknesses in the assessment of what students have learned in mathematics and in day to day assessment in PE. The setting of homework is satisfactory and generally helps to reinforce what has been learned in class.

37. Students with special educational needs are taught well. The coordinator is competent in teaching basic skills. She and her team of support assistants make a valuable contribution to SEN students' progress in lessons, although time for liaison with the subject teacher is short. The school is right, therefore, in considering the attachment of support assistants to curriculum areas. ICT is not used to best advantage, however, as there are not enough up-to-date computers. Some teaching, however, continues to suffer from lack of specific focus on SEN needs. There is a valuable initiative to improve the spelling of students who are otherwise capable learners. There is not a large number of students who are considered gifted and talented, but these students are generally given the stimulus they need. They succeed in getting very good examination results and benefit greatly from the generous extra-curricular activities the school provides.

38. Students mostly acquire knowledge, skills and understanding well. For example, those in a Year 9 lesson on acids and alkalis acquired knowledge at a very good pace, responding instantly to directions and to the teacher's clarity of planning and exposition. They usually make a good effort to succeed, for example in their understanding of Marx in a sixth form lesson in religion and philosophy, or the excellent application of a sixth form violin student, who was highly motivated to succeed. Sometimes, younger students are far less inclined to make an effort, for example in some art lessons at Key Stage 4, and they quite often tend to wait for the teacher to inspire them, rather than contribute much of value themselves. When this happens, they make no more than satisfactory progress, for example in some modern language and mathematics lessons. The behaviour of a significant minority of younger students sometimes interferes with good learning. This is not often the case, because teachers are generally good at managing the class, but in a small number of lessons it leads to unsatisfactory learning. In most lessons, though, students are productive and work at a good pace, for example in almost all drama lessons seen. In one memorable drama lesson in Year 9, students' interest was seized by the teacher's

technique of approaching the subject obliquely, so that everyone was speculating about conditions in seventeenth century New England long before they realised they were studying *The Crucible*.

39. Students learn well when there is practical application and interest, and this is often well exploited by teachers, for example in the sixth form vocational lessons seen. In one such lesson, students had visited a leisure centre and hotel to study marketing, and their shared reports on these produced some lively, perceptive views and conclusions. In such lessons, and for example the practical sessions in drama, PE, science and design and technology, students concentrate and work out things for themselves. In another practical subject, art, this is not the case at Key Stages 3 and 4, because the practical activities given are not engaging enough or presented with much relevance to students' own lives.

40. Students' understanding of what they are doing and how they can improve increases with each key stage. These qualities are satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. The way Year 13 was preparing for examinations was often impressive; for example, students revising *Othello* had a very good grasp of the play and how they could tackle a new question to extract the maximum of meaning from their discussion.

41. The learning of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Those in special classes learn well, as they have the right materials and can make good progress. In mainstream classes, they do not always get the level of material or attention they need. When a support teacher is present, they make good progress, for example in a Year 9 history lesson on the causes of the First World War, when these students could all give an accurate summary of the impact of the assassination at Sarajevo. Those with English as an additional language learn with the same success as all others, as their English does not impair their understanding or progress.

42. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has greatly improved. There is much less unsatisfactory teaching and most is now good. Improved teaching has had a positive influence on results.

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

43. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall, with very good extra curricular provision and strong community links. However, there are weaknesses in the provision across the curriculum for teaching the skills of literacy and numeracy, the failure to meet statutory requirements for ICT at Key Stage 4 for all students and the inequality of timetabling provision for some groups.

44. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is good, meeting all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. However, teaching time for students studying two modern foreign languages is barely adequate, which puts pressure on teachers and students. In English, mathematics and geography, there are classes split between two teachers, and classes unequally spread across the timetabling fortnight. This makes it difficult for all students to maintain the same rate of learning. The very large class sizes in some groups, particularly in mathematics and science, is also having a detrimental effect on students' learning.

45. The curriculum is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Students can take up to eleven subjects to GCSE, three of them being option choices. However, the curriculum fails to meet statutory requirements because students do not receive the experience to which they

are entitled in non-GCSE ICT.

46. The sixth form has a good curriculum, offering 15 A level subjects, several of which can be taken at AS level, and GNVQ courses at intermediate and advanced levels in business, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. However, sixth form provision is adversely affected by the very high number of timetable clashes which prevent many students from gaining access to the full curriculum of their choice. The school debated whether to reduce the number of sixth form lessons, and therefore make it easier to avoid these clashes, but decided not to reduce the allocation, in order to safeguard A level results. However, resolving the question of A level lesson clashes was a key issue for action in the last inspection report.

47. Across all stages, the curriculum for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Students are well supported in the classroom, with lunchtime sessions where extra support is needed. These students have equal access to the full range of curriculum experiences.

48. Some aspects of the timetable and curriculum cause concern for equal opportunities. Although there is open access for students in most areas of the curriculum there is reduced access in modern foreign languages. Here, higher attaining students only are permitted to take a second foreign language in Year 9, thus reducing opportunity at GCSE level. Large class sizes in some groups, particularly at Key Stage 3, have a significant effect upon the achievement of students in these classes, for example in mathematics. Classes where students have more than one teacher are found in geography, mathematics and English with an adverse effect upon continuity.

49. Although literacy and numeracy are taught through many subjects, the lack of policies and cross-curricular strategies means that there is no consistent overall focus on developing the relevant skills. As a result, learning opportunities are missed.

50. The school provides a very full range of extra-curricular activities, which are open to all. These include sport, drama, music, trips abroad, extra study groups, holiday activities, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Ten Tors expedition and many more. Visits out of school include foreign travel and other residential visits which develop students' independence and initiative. Competitive sporting events are arranged and students are encouraged to join local sports clubs and receive outside coaching. Musical and dramatic activities are well covered and the school makes an annual audit to ensure that the range and standard of all activities are maintained. The lunch break, extended to seventy minutes to allow time for activities, includes time for an additional learning support programme. This is well devised and is supported by learning support assistants, two of whom have youth work experience. It is open to all levels from the very able to those who need help with their work. Extra activities such as glass painting are also offered to broaden students' experience.

51. The programme of life education covers a broad range of subjects in the field of personal and social education. These include health, sex education and drugs awareness, appropriate to each year group. Lessons are sometimes too didactic and do not encourage discussion. The quality of preparation for work experience and planning for careers is good, and weeks which concentrate on business and industry links are well planned and increase students' awareness. These weeks include exercises such as mini-enterprise schemes and mock interviews when members from local industry offer their assistance and advice. Teaching of life education is mixed in quality and students at all key stages find some elements uninspiring. The school has identified the need for training in aspects of the programme, including careers advice and the use of computer based data. It was noted in

the last inspection report that students had misgivings about the teaching and effectiveness of the life education programme.

52. The programme for work experience in Year 10 is very good. It is well supported by the school's contacts in the community and parents make a valuable contribution. Students find the experience stimulating. Some work shadowing is being introduced for sixth formers. Careers education is very well provided and begins when students join the school in Year 9. All students are interviewed by a representative of the county careers service, and on return from work experience are debriefed by school staff. The quality of advice in the sixth form is very good. There is a good careers library, with data on computers which students are taught to handle.

53. The school devotes much time and effort to its links with the community. These are very good and benefit students in all years. For example, Year 9 students have a two day industry conference, when they visit work places and are introduced to presentation and teamwork skills. In Year 10, they learn how to plan their future through work experience and the help and advice of employers. In Year 11, all students have a mock interview organised by the local Rotary Club. In the sixth form, in addition to work shadowing related to GNVQ courses, there is an enterprise and initiative conference. Young Enterprise schemes are included in Years 10 and 12. The considerable help given by local commerce and industry brings immense benefit to students. Good links have been made with a disability unit to enable students to consider the problems faced by them and students are asked to consider the difficulties that would be found for them at Wadham School. This imaginative link gives students the chance to develop their understanding of issues of equal opportunity.

54. The school is a member of a strong local group of schools which undertakes several useful joint projects. For instance, a senior management group is working with the middle schools to improve the continuity of assessment through a common assessment policy across all three schools. There is a well thought out programme for the transfer of students from the middle schools, appreciated by students in Year 9. The previous report called for further development of curriculum links with middle schools. These are now well established in all main subjects.

55. The school was officially designated a Community School in 1987, but had for many years previously engaged in a wide range of links with the local community. It has established good relationships with businesses and other organisations in the town. It makes good use of these to enhance the curriculum as well as to provide more experiences, activities and sometimes resources in many subjects.

56. The community education co-ordinator for the area has an office in the school next to a community lounge. This makes an effective link between school and community. The co-ordinator is secretary of the Association of Crewkerne's Community Education and Support Services (ACCESS), an organisation which provides a forum for all local groups. ACCESS has succeeded in getting two major lottery funded projects - the Aqua Centre and Heritage Centre and is bidding for a new sports centre for the town. These projects have improved the school curriculum as well as the local community. The youth service works closely with the school, and topics in personal and social education are also considered in the programme of the youth service.

57. Benefits to the school in sharing resources with the community include support for an ICT suite; a number of health and safety benefits; greatly improved swimming facilities allowing students to enter competitions and improved channels of communication with

parents. Holiday activities organised by the co-ordinator provide a useful bridge between the school and younger children who will come to the school later. There are many other activities promoted in the community programme and, although not all of them provide a direct enhancement of the school curriculum, they create attitudes that support learning and raise expectations.

58. Students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. All subjects have at least some effective strategies for teaching students with such needs, but target setting across the curriculum is not yet entirely in place. The coordinator produces materials suitable for students of different abilities. Students with dyslexia have the chance to be in top sets if their capability warrants it. There is extra-curricular help available at lunchtime and after school. There are constructive relationships with the feeder schools, parents, and visiting professionals. The school promotes the social development of students with special needs particularly well. A course is available for managing students' social skills where there is a need.

59. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. Aspects of the teaching of religion and philosophy, now taught throughout the school, increase students' awareness of spirituality. Sixth form extension studies provide some stimuli for personal reflection in religion and art. The school has audited areas of the curriculum offering reflection and the experience of awe and wonder, but though some opportunities are taken, others are missed. The programme of whole-school, house or tutorial assemblies seeks to affirm Christian values. For example, a Year 10 assembly drew students' attention to family relationships. It included an appropriate reading from the Bible and made a good atmosphere for prayer. There is, however, inconsistent practice, especially in tutorial periods, and students do not regularly begin each day with an act of collective worship.

60. The development of students' understanding of moral values is good. The school ethos, expressed in its aims and mission statement, promotes honesty, fairness and respect, clearly distinguishing right from wrong. At Key Stage 4, for example, students seriously consider the moral implications of marriage and divorce. They consider various forms of prejudice in their module on social harmony. In history lessons, they consider the profound moral issues involved in warfare. Teachers provide good role models. Students comment that they enjoy the many lessons where discussion is a prominent feature and where views are freely exchanged and equally valued. They are keen that all kinds of achievement should be celebrated.

61. Social development is very good, recognised by the Schools Curriculum Award. There are many opportunities for students to manage their own learning, for example in science and modern languages. Students are encouraged to take responsibility, for example in library duties. The house system, organised largely by the sixth form, promotes competition and team work. The school council provides a suitable forum for students to contribute to the running of their school. The good range of extra-curricular activities, including residential visits, makes a positive contribution to social development. Students are encouraged to take part in community and charitable activities and have raised money for many good causes, for example Leprosy, Turkish earthquake victims and Children in Need. The local club for the disabled meets three times a week at Wadham, where the members are welcomed by the students.

62. Provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory. Visits are arranged to theatres, art galleries and abroad. Students have visited Stratford and the National Gallery. There have been trips to France and Germany and an e-mail link with the Humboltschule in Wiesbaden, Germany, has recently begun. Studies in history, for example, help them to

appreciate their own culture. They have limited opportunities, however, to explore other cultures. Studies in art are rooted in the western tradition. Whilst students study to some extent the Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist religions there is no opportunity to study Islam. Aspects of non-European cultures can be met in modern languages because of North African and Turkish immigration into French and German society, but such exposure is not widespread. Specific multicultural days have been held in past years although not since 1998, and few signs remain of their impact.

63. The school gives students the chance to consider equal opportunities in several areas. In religion and philosophy at Key Stage 4, they consider gender, race and age discrimination. Modules which promote consideration of racist and sexist issues are included in the life education syllabus and in careers.

64. Since the last inspection, the school's success in achieving the Schools Curriculum Award for the second time reflects the continued good quality of the curriculum and the breadth of opportunity available to students. The school has improved the amount of time given to history and geography, the provision of ICT at Key Stage 3, the teaching of GNVQ students and the development of links with the middle schools. However, it has still not made enough progress in improving ICT for all at Key Stage 4 and the unsatisfactory teaching of life education to some classes, or in reducing the size of some large teaching groups at Key Stage 3 and the problem of timetable clashes in the sixth form. In terms of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development since the last inspection, the school has maintained the good standards reported in 1995 and has improved its provision by teaching religion and philosophy beyond Year 9. Limitations in multi-cultural education remain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

65. Teachers know their students well. They identify those who need extra support either within a subject or through the tutors and heads of year. The health and safety policy is sound and students and staff work in a safe environment in school and on work experience. Regular checks are made of school equipment. Child protection is well structured and good practices, as recommended by the local education authority, are adopted by all staff. These ensure that students at risk are correctly monitored and supported. The school works closely with outside agencies in the guidance of those with behaviour difficulties, poor attendance or stress. The school nurse is well known to students as soon as they join the school, as she cares for the middle schools as well. She is also involved in the teaching of the health and sex education programmes.

66. Attendance and punctuality are well monitored by tutors who, with heads of year, obtain reasons for absence. In most cases, parents follow the home-school agreement and support the school to ensure punctuality at the start of the day. Registers are called correctly at the start of the day and before lessons. The education social worker co-operates closely with the school to investigate reasons for absence, visiting parents to devise schemes for

students to resume a more regular pattern of attendance. The school uses attendance statistics well in monitoring students' progress.

67. The behaviour policy and the staff handbook include detailed, useful recommendations on classroom management. Reminders about good behaviour and attitudes are prominently displayed. However, the management of behaviour is not always well conducted and time is wasted, even in well taught classes, in bringing students to order. This occurs mainly in the lower sets at Key Stage 3 and to a lesser extent at Key Stage 4. Students report that rewards and sanctions are not equally applied. The behaviour policy has a well considered section on bullying and staff are rigorous in dealing with incidents of harassment or verbal abuse.

68. Good procedures for monitoring students' academic progress are being developed at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. They are to be extended to Key Stage 3 shortly. Each student has a target grade in every subject, which is reviewed at regular intervals. Parents are involved in the process of setting targets and time is set aside for tutors to monitor results against targets on a one to one basis. Individual students at Key Stage 4 who are achieving below expected levels are identified, their progress monitored, sometimes with the help of a teacher as mentor. Students in this scheme have found it constructive and in most cases teachers have noted improvements. Mentors may be volunteers drawn from school staff and governors as well as contacts in the community. Students who are behind in their work are encouraged to use the learning support scheme at lunchtime. In some instances, special timetables are set up to include differing degrees of work-related education, mainly for disaffected students. The school's reporting systems include assessment of students' personal development. However, reports are not sufficiently sharp in identifying reasons for under-achievement.

69. In the last inspection report, there was concern that students were given too little formal encouragement or academic counselling. This is now achieved by these schemes, although support is not yet equally available to all years. Monitoring of progress and tutorial support in the sixth form remain very good.

70. There is a comprehensive policy and satisfactory practice for the regular assessment of students' attainment and progress. The policy provides clear guidelines for departments to formulate and implement their own procedures. The recent review of assessment practice and policy has involved close collaboration with the partner middle schools. The resulting consensus for future practice and transfer of assessment information on entry to the school is a strength of the new policy.

71. The school has efficient systems to collect and store data on students' attainment on entry to the school. Further data on students' progress is collected and held centrally at key times in the school year, such as reporting and consultation times and option meetings. These and other regular assessments are used for target setting and reviews for individual students, for informing tutors of progress and for the well managed National Record of Achievement.

72. Each curriculum area is responsible for its own policy and the consistency of its practice on the assessment of the students. All departmental assessment criteria are carefully linked to National Curriculum levels in schemes of work. The quality and quantity of information gathered through departmental assessments are variable and are used unevenly across and within departments. There is particularly good practice within lessons in modern foreign languages, where teachers focus clearly on students' strengths and weaknesses. This information is used well to match future work to the students' present

needs. There is good practice in setting targets from base line data in science. However, day to day assessment within PE is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and there is no real target setting based on regular assessment. The assessment of what students have learned in mathematics lessons is not generally well done at Key Stages 3 and 4, so that students' progress is not closely enough monitored.

73. Marking varies in regularity and quality across departments. Comments are not always constructive or diagnostic as, for example, in geography where it is not clear that students know their own personal targets. There is also inconsistent practice within departments as, for example, within mathematics where the marking of classwork and the recording of students' progress are insufficiently monitored. In drama, some work is very carefully marked, with good encouragement on how to develop better work, but other work is very sketchily marked and contains few positive suggestions.

74. Legal requirements for recording National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are met. For those students with special educational needs, annual reviews are carried out efficiently. Assessment of progress for students with special needs is thorough and ongoing. It is well used in curricular planning. The coordinator and support assistants work effectively to overcome students' difficulties and to extend what has previously been learned. The reporting system to parents also meets statutory requirements. Students' academic progress, personal development and behaviour are very well monitored and the results used effectively to raise their achievement.

75. In the last inspection report, marking was considered inconsistent and sporadic, with a lack of constructive commentary. This is still partly the case. However, the use of assessment to diagnose areas for development has improved, and the whole aspect of target setting has been well introduced. Detailed monitoring of how departments implement the school assessment policy has not been introduced.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

76. Parents are very satisfied with the way the school is run and the academic standards achieved. They like the school's sense of mission and purpose, and dealing with well-motivated teachers who produce good results. They are also realistic about the problems which the school faces, such as the low levels of motivation and poor behaviour in certain areas. They see improvements in these situations as part of the overall improvement in many aspects of the school.

77. Communications with parents are very good. Telephone contact is well used if quick response is needed, important notes are sent home by mail and consultation evenings are well conducted to give parents time to get to know teachers and hear their advice. The school's publications are of a high standard. The prospectus gives useful information as students join the school and there is a family handbook which is regularly up-dated. Twice a term there is a newsletter and parents are well advised on such matters as option choices and work experience. Reports to parents on their children's achievement are satisfactory. They vary in quality from subject to subject. They do not always state what students know; nor are they sharp enough in reporting low standards of behaviour and attitudes which are impeding progress.

78. The partnership of the special educational needs department with parents is excellent and well maintained. Parents attend annual and transitional reviews. At times, the departmental coordinator conducts these at the students' homes. Liaison is very good indeed, and contributes well to students' knowledge.

79. The home-school agreement underlines what the school feels is important in the joint education of the individual child. There is full co-operation from parents and the agreement is often referred to in triangular discussions between school, parent and student. The contact (planner) book gives parents knowledge of projects and homework and an opportunity to communicate with teachers. Parents have regular contact with teachers, particularly if their child is receiving additional support such as mentoring or has an individual educational plan. There is a parent council in every year group including the sixth form. Senior members of staff attend these meetings which they regard as important to the school. Parents are regularly involved with sporting activities and attend drama and other performances in good numbers. The school's concern to maintain and develop its role in the community encourages parents and other supporters of the school to join discussions and activities positively.

80. Since the last inspection, the school continues to maintain very good relations with parents, which have a marked benefit for students' education and development.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

81. Leadership given by the headteacher and key staff is good. It is effective in maintaining and increasing standards of attainment. The headteacher knows the parents, staff and students well and has positive relationships with all sections of the school and wider community. Under his leadership, the school has revised its statement of aims. These concentrate on establishing a fair and caring community in which everyone has high expectations of themselves and each other. These aims are well reflected in the school's work. For example, the aims are expressed in a set of expectations of good behaviour and attitude, which are well known in the school and community. With some exceptions, mostly among the newer students of Year 9, these expectations create a positive attitude and help students behave and achieve well. By the time students reach the sixth form, they support these principles strongly and encourage younger students to follow them. The headteacher works closely with two effective and experienced deputy headteachers, delegating to them the regular contact with heads of department and year. In this way, staff work positively with each other, pursuing common policies and reviewing progress together. Heads of department and year, and staff in charge of administrative aspects, provide good management of their areas. For example, the finance officer provides clear and helpful reports on the budget and has implemented the significant recommendations of the most recent audit report.

82. The governing body is effective and well led, working very closely with the headteacher and senior staff. It has well informed committees which cover a wide range of significant issues. The finance committee receives and considers detailed papers on the school's monthly budget performance. The curriculum and examination performance sub-committee is well briefed on the extent and quality of the school's curriculum and activities. It has initiated work on target setting and the value added by the school. It receives regular reports on examination results and oversees the process and evaluation of targets for individual students and subjects. Through its committees and its regular contacts with staff, the governing body has a clear grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including a knowledge of the remaining statutory requirements the school still needs to meet.

83. The school has good systems for monitoring and evaluating its performance. Though a regular scheme for staff appraisal has recently been suspended because of advice given to some teachers by their professional association, performance management

is actively followed. The main vehicle for this is the scheme for supported team review, a system devised by the staff for the regular appraisal of teaching and the performance of staff teams. All departmental and year teams are reviewed once a year, reports are written and points for action included in the team development plans. The evaluation of teaching is rigorous, covering six particular aspects, and has made a very effective contribution to the raising of the quality of teaching. The school has followed up particular problems with a good programme of support for teachers, and by competency proceedings when this has been necessary. It has improved its development planning process, which is closely linked to the county's priorities and to the plans of individual departments. It has a good process, based on carefully collected evidence, for setting targets for individual and departmental achievement. Implementation of this process is satisfactory overall at present, but the scheme is well planned and has the potential for still more effective use, for example in Year 9. Together, team review, target setting and development planning have brought about a good and improved commitment to the shared improvement of the school's performance.

84. Senior management is committed to finding out what parents and students think of the school and to acting on what it discovers. It is good at applying the principles of best value, in most respects. For example, it compares its costs closely with those of other secondary schools in the area. It consults closely about the quality of its service by giving questionnaires to parents and students and sharing results with all concerned. It holds regular meetings of parents to consider the quality of its provision, year by year. It challenges itself to define the services it should be giving, for example in its careful development of the community and vocational programmes, and it makes sure that it gets the best value for money from competitive tenders.

85. Generally, the school plans its educational priorities very efficiently. It has preserved the curriculum and the extensive range of activities well through a period of stringent financial cuts. Good planning and positive relationships among teachers have resulted in generous amounts of extra time given by teachers to extra-curricular programmes, which greatly enhances the quality of education for the students. The school makes good use of new technology for its central administration, for example in its analysis of entry data for academic target setting, but it has not been able to extend the use of ICT to link departments, for example in its monitoring of development planning or in developing patterns of communication by this means. There are plans to do so when finance becomes available. The school makes appropriate use of the specific grants it receives, for example for school improvement and staff training. It makes good use of the funds generously provided by two local educational charities for the further development of resources, though the trustees have had to consider carefully whether their funds should be spent to maintain essential services in the light of the recent cuts in the school's budget. Parents give welcome financial support.

86. The use of resources is not wholly satisfactory in three respects. The cost of staffing the sixth form is too high in relation to that for Years 9 to 11, and there are some very large classes in lower years. The percentage of time spent by teachers in contact with classes is relatively low in relation to the average for secondary schools and on this basis the distribution of teachers is not as economical as possible. Many sixth form students do not get the full number of lessons they should. This reduces the efficiency of staffing and the quality of students' learning.

87. Leadership and management of the special educational needs department are good. They ensure clear direction for both the work of the department and its development within the school. There is clear commitment to high standards. The coordinator has vision

and energy, with a positive impact on the teaching of special needs throughout the school. She undertakes training for all staff to raise their awareness of students' special educational needs. She works with departments to produce materials suited to different levels of ability. She liaises well with pastoral staff in the teaching and welfare of students on Stage 1 of the code of practice. There is a good match between need and the provision of extra help for those with statements. Although departments continue broadly to address the needs of SEN students, not all have produced subject-specific targets for students to work towards. Progress towards such targets as exist is carefully monitored and is effective.

88. The school does not meet statutory requirements for teaching ICT to students not taking the GCSE course in IT at Key Stage 4. The school is not meeting the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Statutory requirements for special needs are fully met. Information on the provision for special needs and the procedure for making complaints is published in the prospectus. However, more detail, including an evaluation of the success of the policy and its funding is required, both in this document and in the governors' annual report to parents. The governing body is appropriately involved in oversight of the provision for students with special needs. Funding allocated is clearly identified by the school and fully supports the development of the required provision, including that for students with statements.

89. The school has a clear commitment to equal opportunities. The co-ordinator and her committee actively seek their promotion. The last report indicated concern over the underachievement of boys and the school has taken steps to remedy this by working with a local project and in a local consortium of schools. It is aware that there is more work to do, particularly at Key Stage 4. Teachers are good role models for students.

90. The match of the number, qualifications and experience of the classroom staff to the demands of the curriculum is good in most areas and teachers are deployed mainly in their specialist subjects. There is a problem in physical education of insufficient specialists to cover the curriculum adequately. In mathematics, a Year 9 class is taught by three different teachers, which restricts overall guidance for the individual student. There is a good balance of experienced teachers and those new to the profession. Support staff make a very valuable contribution to the work of departments. The school is well supported by the work of the administrative and clerical staff. Roles and responsibilities for all staff members are clearly defined and detailed job descriptions are centrally stored and are in the possession of each member of staff. The school has been awarded the Investors in People standard and this has helped to draw all sections of the school staff together and ensure that the training needs of all are considered. The special needs department is well provided with staff. The co-ordinator is well trained and experienced, and is developing very good learning support staff. Their work is becoming well integrated into the whole curriculum.

91. Arrangements for the induction and professional development of all staff are good. They give every encouragement to new staff to become effective teachers. There are thorough induction procedures for both newly qualified teachers and for all other new staff, with regular meetings and every new member of staff is allocated a mentor. The school has a formal Initial Teacher Training partnership with a university, to offer teaching experience. In-service training, including staff training days in school, is linked to curriculum needs and is carefully planned.

92. Overall, the standard of accommodation is satisfactory and meets the needs of most subject areas. Most department rooms are grouped and benefit from the positive

effect this has on departmental organisation. The standard is poor in physical education, affecting the range and quality of what can be undertaken. It is unsatisfactory in history, detracting from the experience of learning the subject. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. The best features include the re-modelled and refurbished teaching areas in science and design technology, the sixth form art studio, the library and community lounge. Accommodation for the teaching of special needs is central, flexible and useful. Storage space is at least satisfactory in all subjects, but is insufficient in music. The absence of a separate dining area is unsatisfactory and causes particular problems for history which is affected by smell, litter, damage to displays and the lack of curtains and carpets to soften noise. The hall is centrally situated and is used both for assemblies and drama, which copes well in less than ideal circumstances. Accommodation in physical education is poor. The aesthetic aspects of the subject - dance and gymnastics - cannot currently be taught, because there is no gymnasium. Tennis cannot be included in the curriculum as there are no tennis courts. Damage on the playing fields, caused by badgers and moles, is still a problem. Display is generally good, but litter is a continuing problem, despite the many efforts the school has made to minimise this. The school buildings are used for a wide range of daytime and evening activities, including adult education courses.

93. The school's resources meet the needs of the National Curriculum and post-16 education, in most areas. There are sufficient textbooks and other materials. There is satisfactory provision of audio-visual aids and other equipment used to support teaching. The library is adequately stocked and the quality of books contained there is at least satisfactory. They are well laid out and easy to locate. The library is welcoming and provides a good environment for learning.

94. ICT resources in the school are inadequate. There is about one computer for every twelve students, around the same ratio as at the last inspection, although the majority of the computers have been replaced and upgraded. All but a handful of the machines are based in two rooms which are heavily used for the Key Stage 3 ICT skills courses, the large numbers of Key Stage 4 students taking the GCSE IT course and the GNVQ Key Skills students. This leaves very little time for the desired cross-curricular work in other subjects. Those wanting to develop applications such as computer-aided design, 3-D animation and composition are not able to do so. The school has only two Internet access points. This particularly affects subjects such as science, design technology and art, though other subjects want to make use of it as well. However, positive progress has been made, for example in the conversion of a large room into the two present computer rooms and the placing of computers in the library resource area and careers library.

95. Since the last inspection report, the school has maintained and improved the good quality and effectiveness of its leadership, particularly by the introduction of the supported team review and target setting procedures. Development planning has become more precise and useful, but some problems remain in the allocation of staffing resources. Though the school's leadership has done much to overcome poor behaviour and increase the competence of tutors teaching the life education course, in neither area is it yet wholly successful.

96. In terms of special educational needs, the number of students with statements has increased, although the percentage identified as having special needs has declined, and is now below the national average. Statutory requirements are now fully met. The recommendation of a school spelling policy, to help a wider range of students, has not been implemented. Procedure for annual reviews is now good. All students now have individual educational plans as required. Accommodation and resources have much improved.

97. In terms of staffing resources, since the last inspection the provision of specialist teachers for English, history and vocational education has improved. Physical education still lacks a third specialist and the mathematics department continues to have some groups taken by two or three different teachers. Job descriptions are updated each year and are now more readily available. In accommodation, the school has done what it can to improve its intractable premises, but lacks finance to provide much needed developments, for example in PE, games and ICT. The school has much improved the match of class size and rooms available, for example in the remodelling of the science and design technology teaching areas. GNVQ groups are now taught in a dedicated space and geography accommodation is satisfactory. The problem of some classrooms being used as corridors to others, is now only a problem in art and drama. Very effective health and safety procedures have been introduced. In resources for learning, the number of books per students has improved. The provision for ICT has improved also, but remains inadequate.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

98. The governors and senior staff should now:

- (1) improve provision for, and raise standards in, information and communication technology (ICT)
 - making sure that statutory requirements are met in the quality and range of ICT provided at Key Stage 4,
 - making it possible for subjects to teach ICT across the curriculum and providing sufficient computers and rooms for their use, and
 - improving the access of students with special educational needs to ICT;(see paragraphs 9, 88, 94, 164)
- (2) improve standards in art at Key Stages 3 and 4, particularly in the performance of boys, by ensuring that the subject
 - provides a wider and more attractive curriculum and
 - improves the arrangement of the art rooms;(see paragraphs 4, 26, 137, 139, 140)
- (3) implement policies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, concentrating particularly on the development of the skills of students with special educational needs;
(see paragraphs 8, 13, 43, 49, 114, 126, 127)
- (4) improve the setting and coordination of targets for students with individual education plans, in all subjects;
(see paragraph 87)
- (5) improve the timetable so that clashes of lessons in the sixth form are avoided;
(see paragraphs 43, 86)
- (6) improve students' behaviour where this impedes good learning, especially in Year 9;
(see paragraphs 20, 25, 34)
- (7) improve the marking of students' work so that teachers give a better

indication of how students can enhance their performance;
(see paragraphs 36, 73)

- (8) provide comparatively more teaching time at Key Stages 3 and 4, and comparatively less in the sixth form, so that over-large classes do not happen in Years 9, 10 and 11.
(See paragraph 86)

The school development plan for 1999-2000 mentions aspects of items 1, 3, 6 and 7 above.

99. Other weaknesses which the school should consider for action are mentioned in the following paragraphs:

- boys' attainment at Key Stage 4; (see paragraph 3)
- the assessment of students' work in mathematics and PE; (see paragraphs 72, 123, 191)
- multi-cultural development; (see paragraph 62)
- the lack of a daily act of collective worship for all students. (See paragraphs 59, 88)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

100. Community provision is reported in section 4.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	154
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	14	54	25	5	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	593	181
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	26	-

Special educational needs	Y9 -Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	44	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	101	98	199

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	68	76
	Girls	73	63	67
	Total	135	131	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (71)	66(61)	72(65)
	National	63 57)	62(60)	55 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (43)	38 (36)	36 (33)
	National	28 (23)	38 (37)	23 (29)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	72	85
	Girls	79	68	79
	Total	142	140	164
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72(72)	70(69)	83(78)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60(61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	45 (39)	32 (30)	38 (39)
	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

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	83	96	179

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	44	74	77
	Girls	63	91	92
	Total	107	165	169
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	60(54)	92(95)	94 (99)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45 (44.5)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	32	48	80

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	17.3	18.8	18.3 (20)	5.3	6.5	5.9
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (-)	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	14
	National	72.5

International Baccalaureate	Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	n/a
	National	82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	770
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	32	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	43.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	319

Deployment of teachers: Y9 - Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.1
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y11

Key Stage 3	28
Key Stage 4	25.1

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2050878
Total expenditure	2073633
Expenditure per pupil	2679
Balance brought forward from previous year	43722
Balance carried forward to next year	20967

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	774
Number of questionnaires returned	303

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	49	8	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	41	51	5	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	57	8	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	59	17	4	2
The teaching is good.	24	67	5	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	49	16	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	46	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	40	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	30	53	11	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	42	48	3	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	52	4	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	52	10	1	9

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The meeting of parents before the inspection was largely positive in its views. Most parents thought standards very good across the curriculum. This was achieved because of enthusiasm from teachers, high expectations and good target setting. Not everyone agreed that the motivation was that good, but results gave satisfaction.

The school was very positive and caring and lived up to its motto. It encouraged self-worth and mutual respect; also a respect for learning. It promoted very good extra-curricular activities, but there were huge problems with netball and tennis facilities.

There were some behaviour problems, but this has improved a lot and the school was keen to promote good behaviour by all possible means.

Homework was good, useful, plentiful. There were problems when teachers did not keep to the timetable, and frustration when deadlines were not insisted upon.

Partnership with parents was good. Reports were informative, particularly sixth form. Parents are involved in target setting and are well informed about it. Communication is good. Teachers know students very well.

Improvement in recent years has been impressive. There is a greater sense of mission and purpose. Results have improved. The school's reputation has much improved in town.

There was a good pastoral system, with improvements in PSE. There is a good anti-bullying policy, which often works very well.

Inspectors largely agree with parents' views.

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

ENGLISH

101. When students enter the school their attainment in English is a little below the nationally expected level. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, the percentage of students obtaining higher grades was close to the national average in 1999. On the basis of teacher assessments, the percentage of students reaching level 5 or above was above the national average, and the percentage of students reaching level 6 was well above it. The school is right in its diagnosis that inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation and grammar have depressed students' test grades and that teachers' assessments last year were overly optimistic in paying too little attention to this. Good strategies to raise achievement in this area are already in place. Taking the four years of 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of both boys and girls in English exceeded the national average by the equivalent of approximately six months progress. Standards have declined slightly but consistently over the last three years. A comparison of the school's performance with national benchmarks shows performance in national tests at this stage to be below that of similar schools.

102. By the end of Key Stage 3, students listen carefully to the teacher and each other. They are beginning to develop the effective skills of oral collaboration which aids their personal development and independent learning throughout their school career. They take part in Shakespearean rôle play confidently and with a good perception of the character. Students are learning to annotate texts and make effective notes. All read without difficulty a range of leisure fiction at the start of lessons. Some students progress to more demanding texts, and read extensively both for interest and pleasure. Students write in a wide range of styles. Impressively word-processed and illustrated magazines, produced collaboratively, are a strong feature of their attainment. At best, writing is stylish and accurate, but there is a high level of work with major inaccuracies of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

103. It is a strong feature of the department that such a high proportion of students are entered for GCSE in both English and English literature. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C in both examinations is significantly above the national average and has improved consistently over the last three years. Grades A to G are in both subjects broadly in line with the national average. Girls outperform boys by a significant margin.

104. By the end of Key Stage 4, students have well developed skills of oral collaboration. They feed back their group findings confidently to the class. When they read classical authors, they are increasingly able to pay the close attention to text required for successful literary criticism. When studying a sophisticated novel such as *Of Mice and Men* students readily identify themes in the novel and explain the ways in which they are linked. They identify layers of meaning in unseen prose, and comment on stylistic features. They annotate effectively and produce good notes. Literary criticism shows good levels of insight and analysis. Students write with increasing accuracy. Presentation is good when ICT is used, but, because of lack of access to machines, word processing is usually done at home. The inaccuracies seen in students' work in Year 9 have been largely corrected, though some problems remain for average and lower attainers.

105. At A level, the proportion of students obtaining A and B grades was significantly above the national average in 1999 and 1997. In 1998, this proportion was broadly in line with the national average. All students have achieved grades A - E for the past five years. The number of students presented for the examination continues to increase. In the sixth

form, students co-operate effectively to produce revision materials of high quality to help them in their study of *The Merchant's Tale*. When studying *Othello* they argue cogently whether *Othello* is a credulous fool or a noble hero. In *The Merchant's Tale* students readily understand the meaning and the implications of the garden of love. They prepare good textual evidence to illustrate their perceptions. Students' essays show a grasp of complex issues and frequently range across several texts. Clear analysis is expressed stylishly and precisely.

106. Teaching is entirely satisfactory and almost all of it is good or very good. Teachers have a deep and extensive knowledge of their subject which they use both to inspire and challenge students. In a Year 13 lesson on *Mansfield Park*, for example, students were able to come to an imaginative appreciation of Fanny Price's situation in the Bertram family because the teacher was able to place the characters so firmly in their social and historical setting. Students were able to understand Jane Austen's use of irony in this lesson because they were given such telling examples of it. Lesson planning is consistently good, and goals are clear and known to the students. As the lessons stem from such good knowledge, students are interested in them and class management appears effortless at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In Year 9, however, the very large classes are difficult to manage because of sheer numbers, and the teachers are unable to pay equal attention to everybody in the class. Time is generally well used. The lessons are brisk. Learning materials are well chosen and often specially prepared to overcome specific difficulties. The use of ICT in lessons is effective but there is too little access to the machines. As a result, students, particularly boys, do not make all the progress in writing that they might. Assessment of all students is careful, reliable and well used in curriculum planning. Worthwhile homework is set on a regular basis. As a result of the good teaching, students make good progress. Teachers use their erudition to make texts accessible to students. When the teacher says, "There's a good story here", the students believe it and redouble their efforts to appreciate it. Except in Year 9, where behaviour can be rowdy and attitudes only satisfactory, behaviour and attitudes are good. They are very good in the sixth form. In a Year 11 lesson in which students prepared for a mock examination, behaviour was particularly good. Students made well considered and appropriate contributions to the lessons, often spontaneously. In another, lower set in Year 11, students settled doggedly to the written tasks, determined to succeed. At all key stages, students show interest in their work, a capacity for extended concentration, and know what they must do to improve.

107. Management of the subject is energetic, well informed and highly effective. Teaching and learning are carefully monitored and evaluated and are a major reason for improved examination performance at Key Stage 4.

108. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved and is now almost entirely good and very good. Some non-specialist teaching continues in Year 9, but all the teaching is at least satisfactory. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C in English and English literature has risen steadily in the past three years although the entry policy has remained unaltered. The high proportion of students achieving good grades at A level has held steady. The unsuitable double lessons provided for the subject, and the harmful clashes in the sixth form with other subjects, persist. The department continues to tackle the comparative under-achievement of boys.

Drama

109. Results in GCSE drama are very high in relation to the national average and to the performance of these students in other subjects in the school. Over the last three years, the percentage of A*-C grades achieved has been over 90, and was 97 in 1998. In A level

theatre studies, results at grades A and B have been above average in two of the last three years and almost all students have achieved a pass.

110. Standards in lessons are at least appropriate and often high. They reach expected levels in Year 9, where students have enough control of their own behaviour to respond to the purpose of the session, for example working in groups in a scene from *Macbeth*. At Key Stage 4, students can often achieve a polished performance with good use of gesture and voice, for example in preparing for assessed coursework in groups. In the sixth form, standards of textual knowledge and performance are high. For example, students performed extracts from Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, often with an imaginative grasp of character and meaning.

111. Teaching is at least satisfactory and often good or very good. In one lesson it was excellent. This was a Year 10 introduction to Miller's *The Crucible*, in which the teacher's excellent knowledge of the play and its context led to extremely good planning, so that students were drawn into the complexities of the action well before they met the text, and so were keen to know more. They made very good progress in understanding, especially as their behaviour was unhelpful at the outset. Generally, teachers have good knowledge of their subject and very good class control and lesson timing. They plan lessons well and conduct practical sessions with energy and clarity. Their marking of written work is variable in quality, from one teacher very full and helpful, from another sketchy and without ideas for the improvement of students' work. However, their practical assessment of performance is very good and leads to high standards. Good teaching leads to rapid and confident progress and good results.

112. Drama is very well managed. Teachers are experienced in the monitoring and improvement of individual and group performance, achieving higher results than might be expected from these students. The subject makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school, with regular productions involving many students and staff, and a number of smaller presentations as well.

113. Since the last inspection, drama has maintained and improved its good results. Standards of achievement in Year 9 have improved. It continues a popular and successful subject.

Literacy across the curriculum

114. Despite the absence of whole school literacy and spelling policies, standards of literacy support learning in all areas of the school. Students listen well to the teacher and to each other and develop useful skills of oral collaboration in English, science, geography, and the life education course. They alter the way they speak for a variety of different audiences in modern foreign languages. Work in drama contributes to standards of speaking and listening across the curriculum. This is generally satisfactory, sometimes good, but there are many students who are reticent speakers and who do not take the opportunities offered to improve their competence in speaking.

115. Students read effectively for information, for example in art, music, geography and science. In history, students read topic booklets at their own pace at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, they select and extract information from a variety of written material. In modern foreign languages, students read for the gist, infer from the context and are able to guess the meaning of a word in one language from their knowledge of another. Students read aloud to the class, and support their studies with wider reading in science. They are taught key words to help them in their mathematical studies. In English, they are able to pay the

close attention to text required for literary criticism.

116. There are opportunities for descriptive and evaluative writing in design and technology and the GCSE ICT course. In modern foreign languages students are aware of the need to write accurately and clearly. They apply grammatical rules reliably and are aware of informal and formal styles of writing. There are good opportunities for extended writing in English, RE and history and geography where students are encouraged to write original material, express their own opinions and feelings and give the viewpoint of others. Students present their research to a good standard in geography. Students write imaginatively in art and have written on *My Dream* in preparation for a painting. Although work is corrected, students do not regularly re-draft their work. Although presentation is neat, students do not have enough opportunity in school to present their writing in striking and original ways using ICT.

MATHEMATICS

117. Attainment in mathematics is above the standards expected nationally and has been consistently so over several years.

118. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, attainment at level 5 and above (67%) was slightly higher than the national average. Results at level 6 and above were in line with the national average. Apart from 1998 when results at Key Stage 3 were in line with national standards the school has maintained these higher than average standards. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls at this key stage. The higher percentage of boys gaining level 7 reflects their prior attainment on entry. Performance in national tests in 1999 was below that of similar schools. Attainment as observed in lessons and work seen reflects the test results, particularly for students of average and above average attainment. In a Year 9 high attaining set, students have good algebraic skills. They can multiply out brackets and substitute well into linear and quadratic functions. They can use these skills well in problem solving activities such as 'the square problem' where they use algebraic notation to identify cells within the square. They are less competent in explaining results and less secure in their understanding of more difficult concepts such as similar triangles. Students of average attainment can use scales in maps well. They can find, measure and draw bearings. Those students of below average attainment or with special educational needs are mostly confident in table skills and can use simple unitary method to change recipe amounts. However they often leave work unfinished.

119. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE mathematics in 1999 is above the national average. This is an improvement from the results of the previous two years. There are no significant differences between the results for boys and girls. By the end of the key stage the highest attaining students are competent in working with indices, histograms and trigonometry. Other high attaining students in Year 10 can draw cumulative frequency curves and find standard deviations, although sometimes without understanding why. Students in the average attainment range are competent in basic algebraic skills and are able to estimate the mean of grouped data although several are not clear as to why they find the mid-points of class intervals. The lowest attaining students and those with special educational needs can work with coordinates and scatter graphs. They can complete simple linear sequences and recognise two dimensional representations of simple solids. However, they often find difficulty in reading and understanding examination questions.

120. Attainment in mathematics at the end of the A level and AS level courses is also above average when compared with results nationally. There is a regular pattern of a high

number of A and B grades and in most years there is 100 per cent pass rate. Students in Year 13 achieve very highly in applied mathematics and are able to explain and present their work well. Students find pure mathematics topics, such as solving equations and integration using trigonometrical ratios, more difficult. Other post-16 students re-taking GCSE mathematics are less successful. Student numbers decline over the course and there are few pass grades.

121. Most teaching in mathematics is satisfactory. Teaching in around one third of lessons is good, particularly in the sixth form. There is, however, a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4.

122. All teachers of mathematics have good subject knowledge and are well informed on the requirements of the examinations taken by the students. This enables the students to prepare well for their examinations and to acquire good mathematical skills. Teachers plan well for content but less well to include a variety of methods and strategies to take account of students' varied learning styles at Key Stages 3 and 4. This is partly because of the very large class sizes. As a result, although students make good progress in written skills they are less able to explain their results or give reasons for some of their answers. In lower attaining sets this lack of imaginative approaches to learning can result in poor behaviour which prevents satisfactory progress, as in a Year 9 lesson on simple ratio. Conversely, an interesting approach to study skills assisted a Year 11 group of low attainers in concentrating on their revision work. In A level groups, however, teachers do ensure that students take independent responsibility, ensuring they explain their work to each other and setting their mathematics in practical contexts.

123. All teachers have high expectations for their students, encouraging them to obtain the best possible results. However, across the department, teachers pay insufficient attention to the assessment of what students actually learn within a lesson. Their progress is thus monitored less rigorously and their misunderstandings are missed, as in a Key Stage 3 lesson on bearings where some students were unsure in measuring the bearing from the North line. Marking of students' tests is good but there are still inconsistencies in the quality of marking of classwork across the department as there are in the recording of students' attainment. Language development and cultural opportunities are insufficiently emphasised in lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are generally well managed. This ensures their cooperation in lessons even when classes are shared between teachers. However, in a few classes students lose their concentration when they are expected to listen for too long a period, or to wait for individual help, or when questioning is not well matched to their level of attainment.

124. Other contributory factors affecting students' attainment in mathematics include the good team work within the department as a result of the support given by the head of mathematics. However, monitoring of teaching in the department and of students' work is still largely informal. Resources are well deployed, but the department has insufficient access to information technology to enhance its teaching of mathematics. Some very large classes, shared groups and timetable clashes lessen the department's effectiveness in raising attainment. The poor behaviour in some lower attaining sets negatively affects their progress. The department has yet to contribute to subject targets within individual education plans.

125. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress. GCSE results have improved as have some lessons in Year 9. Schemes of work have been reviewed to encourage accelerated progress in Year 9. There is improved liaison with feeder schools. The lack of access to computers and need for greater variety of learning

strategies in lessons still remain to be addressed.

Numeracy across the curriculum

126. The school has not yet developed a policy for numeracy across the curriculum, nor has an audit of numeracy skills taken place across all departments. The school's response to the development of numeracy through all subjects is unsatisfactory.

127. On entry to the school, students' numeracy skills are broadly average. Within mathematics there are developing strategies to improve students' number work through planned activities in lessons. Calculators are used sensibly and rarely. Students make some use of numeracy in a few subjects apart from mathematics. For example, in science, students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, recognised mathematical patterns in a density, mass and volume experiment. In geography, students can work competently with scale and distance. They can read information from tables and can apply statistical methods to data collected. In physical education, most students confidently use scoring systems involving mental arithmetic. They time, measure and record performance in health related fitness lessons. In modern foreign languages, students convert currencies, count and shop competently. Other subjects make little or no contribution to the development of numeracy.

SCIENCE

128. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is well above the national average and this standard has been maintained over the last four years. In 1999, while the national average standard fell slightly, the school's average rose. Performance by boys was slightly higher than girls. The standards attained are also above those achieved by students in similar schools. Observation of lessons confirmed these high standards. For example, students completed an experiment using the reaction between acids and metal oxides to produce salts and fully understood the underlying theory; others competently investigated a series of energy transformations using sophisticated equipment such as oscilloscopes and signal generators. From an early stage in the school, students make good use of their skills in literacy and numeracy, which are encouraged and developed by good teaching.

129. High standards are maintained at Key Stage 4. In 1999, the proportion of both boys and girls attaining the higher GCSE grades (A*-C) was above the national figures and the average grade gained, which reflects the performance of all students, was well above that achieved nationally. Although at Key Stage 4 girls on average achieve better standards than boys, at the higher grades boys achieve as well as girls in marked contrast to the national picture. The significant rise in standards from 1997 to 1998 has been maintained in 1999. In lessons observed, all students were working at the highest levels appropriate to their prior attainment. Students in a top set easily related their knowledge of diffusion to the movement of substance into living cells and successfully set up an experiment to demonstrate osmosis. In a lower attaining group, students were able to use pinhole cameras to demonstrate the inversion of images and to consolidate their understanding of the rectilinear propagation of light. Students of average attainment quickly appreciated the significance of plants' sensitivity to light and gravity through successful experiments on the growth of barley seedlings.

130. Attainment by students taking A level matches expectations based on their achievement at Key Stage 4 and is often better. Overall, the results in 1999 showed a slightly better pass rate than that achieved nationally. The results in chemistry, where all candidates received grades B or C, and in the new psychology A level, where nearly half

the candidates gained these higher grades, represents good achievement. Standards observed in the classes due to take A level in 2000 and 2001, which contain a larger number of students, were good. A level biology students undertook the experimental measurement of the "respiratory quotient" in live woodlice and produced accurate results. Chemistry and physics students revising for mock examinations were able to score high marks on past papers with minimum teacher help. All A level students have records of work, which are complete, set at the levels needed for the highest grade and contain assessed work of high quality. If the standards observed during the inspection are maintained, future A level results, particularly the number of higher grades, will improve.

131. Teaching across all the subjects included in the department is good and most frequently it is very good. The response of students to this quality of teaching shows in both their attainment and their very positive attitudes to science. The primary features of teaching are meticulous planning and very good assessment of students' work, which enables their progress to be closely monitored and encouraged. Lessons always include adventurous experimental work, which is both challenging and stimulating, but also ensure that students are able to record work easily and accurately. Students enjoy their lessons, their understanding is enriched by the "hands on" approach and their confidence raised by the care taken to ensure that each piece of work is written up correctly. The introduction of CASE (Cognitive Accelerated Science Education) lessons into Year 9 typifies both teaching and learning. Students in a large, mixed ability class learned about the relationships between compound variables by being asked to predict whether vessels of differing mass and volume would sink or float. By the end of the lesson, some students were able to derive the formula for density from first principles and all were able to predict "sinkability" correctly. The confidence and security with which students approach science were evident in a lesson for students of average ability in Year 11. All maintained concentration during a long question and answer session on the importance of auxins (plant growth hormones); they could discuss their learning intelligently and then set up a difficult and intricate experiment based on their new knowledge.

132. The wide range of ability and large class size in Year 9 and some sets in Years 10 and 11 sometimes limit the teachers' ability to provide good learning experiences for all the students in these groups. In Year 9, students with special educational needs do not always receive the level of support required. In some Key Stage 4 classes where students are being prepared for different levels of examination paper, teachers cannot always cover aspects of the syllabus at the right level for all students, with a consequent effect on standards attained. Lessons in A level subjects are both demanding and interesting. All theoretical work is set at the level required for the highest pass grade and practical work in both quantity and quality is of a very high standard. Students working in biology were each able to set up complex equipment including a sensitive manometer and all took obvious pride in their self-sufficiency.

133. Enthusiasm and commitment to both subject and student welfare are also characteristic of the science teaching. Students respond by working very hard, many happily attend extra revision lessons held out of lesson time and all take great care and pride in their written work. Students' behaviour in the science department is rarely anything other than exemplary: they attend well to teachers, maintain concentration, are safe and trustworthy when doing experiments, work well together in groups and clearly value the approval of their teachers. The teaching methodology also encourages independence in the students. They are actively involved in monitoring their own progress, both in coverage of the syllabus and in the standards they are achieving. By the time they enter the sixth form most are mature and independent learners. A level psychology students are using original research material to supplement information in text books and, with the help of a

local first school, are planning their own research into Piaget's theories on child development. Students in Year 9 who are unusually talented in science are invited to extra lessons at lunchtimes. The success of this recent innovation is evident in willing attendance and the students' achievement of the highest level in the Key Stage 3 tests.

134. The science curriculum is well organised and appropriate to the needs of the students except for the timetable arrangements which produce large classes containing a wide spread of attainment in Year 9 and parts of Years 10 and 11 and have a negative effect on the learning of some students. Monitoring of students' learning and progress is very good. Frequent tests are set at National Curriculum levels and the results incorporated into a comprehensive spreadsheet which includes all other relevant tests and measures. This spreadsheet is used to construct realistic but challenging targets for all students and to monitor the effectiveness of teaching. One laboratory is small, of poor design and lacks the services necessary for a full range of practical work. The department has a good range of modern resources, which are well used to enrich the learning opportunities. Staff are skilled in the use of computer technology and the data logging undertaken includes a wider than usual range of experimental work. However, the small number of obsolescent computers and poor access to the school's newer machines seriously limit use. The support provided by the extremely hard working and well-qualified laboratory technicians is excellent. Extra efforts by technicians and teachers are presently compensating for recent reductions in the hours allocated to technicians, but standards are likely to be affected during periods of peak demand. Leadership and management are very good at all levels within this large and complex department. All subjects, including the recently established A level course in psychology, are well organised, well resourced and well taught.

135. Since the last inspection the department has made good improvement; standards of attainment are higher, teaching is better, accommodation although still inadequate is much better and the use of modern computer technology is much more extensive.

ART

136. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with nationally expected levels. 1999 teacher assessments show girls' attainment in line with national averages but boys' well below reflecting the national picture. Year 9 lessons and work samples provide evidence of many students developing satisfactory and sometimes good drawing and painting skills, knowledge of artists such as Chagall and understanding of a range of art vocabulary. However, by no means all students acquire such satisfactory skills, knowledge and understanding. Many students show poor concentration and the quantity of work produced in lessons and for homework is inadequate. A major factor in this is the unsatisfactory working environment provided. Large classes are obliged to organise themselves around four basic work stations with the result that they get in each other's way, take far too long to obtain their work and materials and to settle down. This leads to frustration, friction and sometimes poor behaviour and lack of progress.

137. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well below average. GCSE results each year since the last inspection have been well below the national average for grades A*-C although broadly in line with the average for grades A*-G. In 1999 grades A*-C showed a small improvement but remained well below average. Boys' results were particularly weak. Subject performance indicators show that students did least well in art compared with all their other subjects. Work in lessons and sketchbooks and in work sampled provided a number of examples of good observational drawing and painting. For instance Year 10 still life drawings in the manner of Morandi showed that students have a good grasp of how to achieve tonal effects using pencil. Year 11 research for the mock examination showed a

good range of painting and drawing skills, some experimentation with a digital camera, and a very amusing and ingenious three dimensional representation of 'My Brain'. However, comparatively little work in three dimensions was observed. Computers are not used at all and the range of art experiences is limited, being confined mainly to painting and drawing. The negative impact of the working environment on teaching, learning and students' progress applies with equal force to Key Stage 4, where classes are large.

138. Attainment at A level is good. In 1999 out of eleven students, six obtained A or B grades and all passed. The number is relatively small, but this is a good performance. Students demonstrate good individual research and work skills. Coursework is of a good standard. Good quantities of research and studies provide evidence of mature working habits. The quality of finish is good. Original ideas and approaches are evident, such as the much enlarged representation of an eye (untitled) created in white dots on black background based on the work of a modern American painter.

139. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in its outcomes at Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching is good in the sixth form. Teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is often satisfactory or good in subject knowledge and the management of behaviour. However, its effectiveness is lessened by the negative effects of the working environment, particularly in large classes. In several lessons also, time is wasted in giving out materials and work, as for example in a Year 9 lesson when the teacher failed to provide any clear focus for activity and some students took most of the lesson to settle to an activity. In some lessons, the teaching style does not provide an effective start or give the students sufficient focus. The organisation of seating is unsatisfactory and arrangements for collecting work require review. Teachers have not managed to improve the poor performance of boys. The relatively narrow range of the curriculum has a bearing on this, as the curriculum lacks sufficient three dimensional work and the use of ICT is limited. Teachers do not include enough experiment with contemporary styles which might offer some scope for reflecting boys' interests, or enable all students to gain experience of a wider range of media. To do so need not detract from the proper concern to teach sound observational drawing and painting skills which at present dominate the curriculum. In the sixth form, teachers' good subject knowledge is well deployed and attracts a positive response, while the range of the curriculum is well suited for work at this level. At all levels, good use is made of the local environment for sketching and collecting interesting found objects. The annual visits to London galleries are very worthwhile and the students' work is celebrated annually in the summer exhibition.

140. The day to day management of the department is careful and competent. However, the head of department has not analysed the reasons for unsatisfactory performance and has not therefore acted to improve standards. As well as the problems of a narrow curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4, unsatisfactory accommodation and furniture require attention. The open plan nature of the two rooms exacerbates the noise levels. The clutter and general scruffiness of the furniture and its inadequacy for large groups do not make an attractive environment for art lessons and do nothing to enhance the esteem in which the subject is held. Despite this, many students have positive attitudes to the subject and the take-up for A level is good.

141. Since the last inspection, little has changed. Attainment remains much as before. The kilns are no longer used. However, advantage has been taken of the former pottery room to make a very good studio space for the sixth form.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

142. In the 1999 teacher assessments, students in Year 9 achieved results that were just above national averages. This was a slight improvement on the previous year's results. In lessons in Year 9, students reach standards which are at least in line with nationally expected levels. Their practical skills are satisfactorily developed as they work through the programmes of study that build on the work undertaken in the middle schools. They successfully use a sound range of tools, equipment and processes in their tasks. They can work from plans to a satisfactory level of accuracy. They acquire satisfactory design skills, for example when they conduct customer preference surveys in food technology. Sketching and drawing to communicate design ideas are not always well developed. The department wishes to make much greater use of ICT to aid presentation and has good ICT expertise. It is not able to do so due to the lack of sufficient ICT facilities in the school.

143. Students who took the GCSE design and technology-related examinations in 1999 achieved A*-C pass rates which were above the national average by several percentage points. Over the past few years, results have remained at a level just above the national averages. The relative performance of boys and girls has altered and boys have begun to close the gap. In 1997, girls were significantly outperforming boys. The gap in 1999 was in line with the national figures. Students taking what the school calls its core design and technology examination performed significantly better than those who did not. The groups who took the food technology and the textiles technology options in 1999 performed much better than similar groups in previous years. By this time at Key Stage 4, most students are achieving at least satisfactory standards in both the design and practical aspects of their courses and a significant proportion is achieving high standards. Overall achievement in the range of skills and areas of knowledge and understanding demanded by the syllabuses is at least in line with national expectations. Problems are well analysed and a suitable range of solutions is suggested. The presentation of work is rarely enhanced by the use of ICT and much folder work is marred by poor standards of lettering and layout. In the engineering and resistant materials courses practical skills are good, as is the use of modelling to test out designs. Students who take the child development course record satisfactory observations of the behaviour of young children, though they have difficulties relating the observation to a conceptual framework. Graphics students conduct sound research using the Internet when they pursue personal interests such as BMX cycling. However, the lack of Internet access in the department means that this work needs to be done at home. Textiles students produce well researched designs, though their use of mood boards is not well developed.

144. Performance in A level examinations was very good in 1999 and was well above national averages and has improved over the past few years. At this stage in Year 13 students have a good grasp of the area of knowledge and understanding required. Their understanding of both aesthetic and functional considerations is advanced. When they develop their designs, they work with a good understanding of aspects such as ergonomics and the need to consider value for money. They also show a good awareness of the moral considerations which confront designers.

145. Standards of teaching and learning are generally good at all stages and promote good learning. Teachers are well prepared and this leads to little time being wasted in lessons. The department's technician ensures that tools, equipment and materials are ready as well as making a valuable contribution to the teaching of skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge and share this effectively with students through feedback during lessons and marking. Their planning and the writing of schemes of work are good and this promotes sure progress by students. Good progress is promoted by planning which often includes opportunities to progress beyond the main objectives of the lesson. Effective learning is encouraged through clear introductions, expert demonstrations of skills and

techniques and the use of targeting to direct individual effort. This is especially effective in the sixth form where students discuss progress with teachers in individual tutorials. Relationships are mostly good and there are very few distractions due to misbehaviour. In a small number of lessons the teaching fails to challenge all students and individual progress is unsatisfactory. However in these lessons most students are sufficiently motivated to make sure that the work that is set is completed.

146. At all key stages, students' attitudes to the subject are good. They listen well and are receptive to advice and instruction. This has a positive effect on their learning and on standards of attainment. They also help each other when individuals have difficulties. They generally enjoy the subject and take pride in what they do. This also has a positive effect on the way they present and finish their work.

147. The department is well managed. Teachers know their students and their standards well, and monitor the quality of their work to ensure understanding and progress. The lack of ICT facilities in the department has a negative impact on standards of presentation and on the breadth of the challenge and opportunity that can be offered to students. Computer aided design and manufacturing are two areas that are presently not available in the school, despite the interest and expertise in ICT shown by staff.

148. Since the last inspection there have been various changes in the work of the department. There have been necessary improvements in accommodation. In teaching there is now a more satisfactory variety of approaches. Assessment is more clearly linked with National Curriculum levels so that teachers and parents have a much clearer idea about what students know, understand and can do.

GEOGRAPHY

149. Standards of attainment are high at the end of all key stages. Teacher assessments made at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national averages and have shown improvement over the past two years. The difference in results for boys and girls for level 5 and over were similar to those seen nationally. By the end of Year 9, students can write extended explanations and descriptions and are already familiar with the disciplines of geographical enquiry. They have completed some particularly commendable work about the Somerset Levels and the City of Bath.

150. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results have improved from being below national averages and the performance of the same students in different subjects, to being well above the national average in 1999, and significantly above the performance of the same students in different subjects. Significantly more girls gained A*-C results than boys. Of seven students who took the Certificate of Achievement at the end of Key Stage 4, six gained a pass grade. By the end of Key Stage 4, students can carry out investigations into environmental issues, collecting, processing and presenting data to support hypotheses. They have a good understanding of the principles of world trade and industry, and the factors that influence world ecosystems.

151. GCE A level results have improved over the past three years, though the number of candidates has been too low to make meaningful comparisons with national results. Current sixth form work is of a high standard. Students can make the necessary links between academic theory and practical examples, as in relating the sequence of industrial development of a case study to Rostow's theory of development. Coursework investigations into such issues as traffic calming, water supply and demand, and the changing distribution of orchards all show a well developed geographical interest.

152. Teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Overall, teachers demand high standards and push the students to achieve their full potential. As a result, students learn rapidly and make assured progress. Specially effective were teaching methods which presented a variety of learning experiences, such as the group work in Year 9 where students identified factors that affected the Kobe earthquake in Japan, and a Year 10 group where a game of charades was used to develop and learn the vocabulary related to the destruction of the rainforest. Generally, teachers plan lessons well and teach with drive and enthusiasm. Relationships are generally good and management of classes is secure, so that students want to learn and can do so in a conducive atmosphere. However, teachers do not always manage to control classes well at Key Stage 3, where there are some noisy and unco-operative students. In one group, poor behaviour prevented many other students from learning. Although assessment of students' work is good in general, the progress of some students is slowed because their books are not marked often enough.

153. Teachers have prepared some well varied and effective work for students needing learning support. In some classes, the groups were arranged so that the stronger students helped the progress of the weaker. However, in other groups there was a lack of adequate resources for those needing support.

154. Under a new head of department, management has been strong over the past two years, focussing on improving students' attainment through effective monitoring of progress and results, changes in curriculum and syllabus, new teaching methods to develop enquiry skills, positive team building and liaison with middle schools so that a firm foundation is laid for the subject.

155. The issues criticised in the last inspection report have been successfully resolved. Standards now exceed nationally expected levels at all key stages, enquiry skills are well-developed and the sixth form are encouraged to read and research widely. There is a variety of interesting learning activities in lessons, and all Key Stage 3 work is now moderated according to National Curriculum levels.

HISTORY

156. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show standards to be above the national average. The percentage of girls achieving level 5 or above is higher than for the boys, boys' results being in line with national averages. Results have risen over the previous year. In work seen during inspection, students' attainments at the age of 14 are in line with expected levels for the end of Key Stage 3. Students can recognise the main characteristics of the period covered and can select relevant information from text. They can present this information in a variety of forms, in diagrams, illustrations and short written responses. Students can empathise with people from the past and demonstrate their understanding through appreciation of poetry, for example of the war poets. Students recognise that there may be several contributory factors leading to major events and are beginning to make links between cause and effect, and consider the effects of war on people and countries.

157. Results in the GCSE in 1999 are in line with national averages. There is no clear trend in results over the last three years. The results for boys are lower than for the girls, but they were above the national average for boys in 1998. In work seen, students' attainments at the age of 16 are in line with nationally expected levels. Students study aspects of twentieth century history and the majority recognise the international nature of

events, for example the effects of the Wall Street Crash in America on German history. Students consider long and short term effects of major events and those of higher ability can write at length in response to questions requiring analysis of information. Students of lower ability produce responses that are shorter and show a heavy dependence on texts. Students have a wide store of information regarding aspects of the twentieth century. Though their recall is poor, their understanding of the concepts involved is better. A minority of students have a good retention of facts and are able to respond to questions independently and to support their answers with evidence. Students present information in a variety of forms and can extract information from pictures, graphs and maps.

158. Results at A level in 1999 are above national averages for grades A and B. In previous years numbers of students taking A level have been too small for safe comparison with national statistics. Students study historical methodology and use specialist terms with confidence. They achieve at least the expected standard and can write fluently and at length, forming coherent arguments that they support with evidence. Their understanding of the research skills required for the local history project is good and they use source material with confidence.

159. In the great majority of lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory and was often good. Teachers displayed secure subject knowledge which enabled them to respond to students' questions and to link events across borders and time periods. Most lessons were well planned and teachers took steps to use a variety of teaching strategies in order to respond to the needs of all students. Well planned topic books for Year 9 enable students to proceed at their own pace and provide them with an oversight of the complete module studied. The use of topic sheets at Key Stage 4 also provides a useful oversight and record, but lack of monitoring and poor organisation of the students' files sometimes result in confusion and incomplete tasks being included. Most lessons proceed at a good pace and teachers' expectations of students are high. Where clear lesson objectives are set and the focus of the lesson is clearly laid out for the students, progress is good. Where this is muddled by unnecessary facts and explanations by the teacher, students become distracted and lose concentration. In such a situation progress is slow for all, especially so for students of lower attainment. Imaginative teaching techniques are used to develop students' understanding, including the use of oral history sources, role play, photographs and song. Teachers make good use of diagrams and pictures in support of students' learning, but the quality of text books and information sheets is poor in some areas. Good use is made of information technology for research purposes though access is limited for other purposes. There is little use of field work to provide students with first-hand experience of historical research, other than in the sixth form, though Year 10 students profited from a visit to Berlin. Sixth form students make good progress as independent learners. They are encouraged to develop their skills in the analysis of evidence and higher attaining students achieve a high standard in debate. Confidence in the management of extended writing develops with class planning and discussion of the required content. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls across the school. Although the written responses for girls reflect greater care and attention, the oral responses of boys often demonstrate a secure understanding of the concepts involved.

160. The history department is well led and close links have been made between the consortium of local schools. This has enabled the development of some common assessment criteria and monitoring procedures, which supports the monitoring of progress throughout the key stages. The department has taken steps in the development of strategies to enable all students to progress well, particularly in Year 9, and the use of writing frames is valuable in the development of key literacy skills. Greater use of more appropriate tasks is required in some Key Stage 4 lessons. One teaching base is also used

as an eating area; this causes noise and distraction and results in poor learning conditions at times.

161. Since the last inspection, the department has taken action to vary its teaching styles in order to raise the attainment of boys. More imaginative teaching styles are used although there is still a tendency for a lack of focus and pace in some lessons. The attitudes and behaviour of the students reflect the last report. The majority of students work conscientiously though there is a lack of effort and, as a result, less progress by a minority, largely boys. There is greater awareness of the need to provide work at different levels, suited to the needs of individual students. There has been a greater take-up at A level which has increased the pressure on books. Although there has been an increase in the availability of texts, there is still a shortage of suitable books at all levels. Assessment and monitoring procedures have improved and liaison between schools is a strength of the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

162. In the 1999 teacher assessments, students attained levels that were just below national averages. These figures are lower than those in 1998. There is no evidence of a downward trend in the standards seen in the classroom at this stage in Year 9, which are broadly in line with nationally expected levels. Students reach satisfactory standards in word processing and desktop publishing. They are able to combine text and graphics in forms that clearly recognise the needs of their intended audience. They are able also successfully to create databases. They add and amend information and recognise the need to be precise in their operations. They achieve sound standards in the control and measurement aspects of National Curriculum ICT. They know how to move a cursor about the screen using a simple programming language. Teachers' planning shows that all of Year 9 later this year undertake a course that will further develop their skills in this area. They are also able to create satisfactory financial information, using a spreadsheet. They have little chance to develop skills using the Internet due to difficulties of access; there are only two machines running the Internet in the school.

163. A good number of students join the GCSE ICT course. Those who do not receive no planned programme of ICT teaching. The GCSE course has been successful in the two years it has been offered. In 1998 results were above national averages. In 1999 results were well above the national average. In the GCSE groups in Year 11 students achieve standards that are at least in line with nationally expected levels. They have a sound understanding of database structure and are able to use the relevant terminology. When they are introduced to a problem-solving exercise to familiarise them with computer-aided design software, they successfully use unfamiliar software tools. In project work, they identify organisations which would benefit from information technology and successfully plan ICT solutions. They develop sound justifications for the solutions they propose and are able to evaluate what they do competently. They can make comparisons of different software, satisfactorily detailing factors such as ease of use, price and suitability for potential clients.

164. Students who do not follow the GCSE ICT course during Key Stage 4 do not experience the full range of ICT as outlined in the National Curriculum. For them, the curriculum does not comply with statutory requirements. Though they do experience some cross-curricular ICT in subjects such as science, geography and history, the overall picture is bleak. Access to machines is infrequent, due to the demands on rooms made by the taught courses and students do not satisfactorily acquire and develop the required range of skills. They have little or no experience of modelling information or of data handling. Their

understanding of control technology largely stops at the end of Year 9. Sixth form GNVQ students satisfactorily acquire the range of ICT skills outlined in their course requirements. They can use word processing packages and successfully combine text and graphics.

165. At Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory. Teachers are well prepared and the comprehensive schemes of work ensure that students can cover the range of information technology required by the National Curriculum. There is good support offered to teachers and students by the ICT technician. The subject knowledge of teachers at this key stage varies but they are conscientious and make sure that they are at least one step ahead of students. One consequence of less secure subject knowledge is that teachers sometimes too rigidly control the progress of some students by insisting that the whole class progress at a similar rate. However, some of the support sheets given to students at both key stages contain extension work to allow the more able to get on a little faster. The support sheets ensure that students have a clear idea of what they have to do next and this helps to maintain satisfactory progress.

166. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 4 are variable. In the GCSE courses, they are at least satisfactory. For the remaining students, they are unsatisfactory. In the GCSE lessons, teaching generally is based on good subject knowledge which encourages students to make good progress. Good relationships make sure that lessons are purposeful and little time is lost. For the students who do not have taught ICT lessons, the quality of learning is poor. Though teachers of various subjects want to offer a broad range of ICT teaching, a lack of resources prevents them from doing so and learning suffers as a result. In the sixth form GNVQ lessons, the teacher has a grasp of ICT in commercial and other contexts, which broadens and encourages learning.

167. The subject is at present coordinated by the head of science, who is very knowledgeable and does all that is possible in the time available, but who lacks the opportunity, both from shortage of time and resources, to develop the subject across the curriculum. The school has advertised for a full-time coordinator.

168. Students have a strong interest in ICT. They enjoy using the medium. In class they listen attentively to instruction and advice and this has a positive effect on their learning. They enjoy the challenge new software brings and persevere with tasks, even when initial attempts fail. They often help each other to overcome problems and share knowledge freely amongst themselves.

169. ICT resources are poor. The school has a computer-student ratio which is less favourable than the national figure and is about the same as at the last inspection. There is also poor Internet access which restricts opportunities for research. Most subjects have some expertise to make good use of ICT, but a lack of resources stops them from doing so. Despite this unsatisfactory situation, the school's provision of ICT courses during Key Stage 3 and at GCSE represents a real improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

170. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with nationally expected levels. Students listen well, getting the gist of authentic French recordings about daily activities. Most students speak unambiguously, but only the highest attainers take the initiative in conversation. Average attainers reply competently to direct questions about what they did during the day but rarely prolong exchanges. The lowest attainers manage short, simple phrases, but become less confident, for example dealing with the precise

times activities take place. Students read, from simple sentences to several paragraphs, according to their ability. They can use basic tenses. Only the highest attainers write competently at length, but the least able need only to put their sentences together to make effective paragraphs. Students with special educational needs work towards suitable targets just as well as their peers. Higher attainers take German also, handling all skills effectively, for example in work on hobbies. Standards as assessed by teachers at the end of the key stage last year were very slightly above the national average.

171. Standards at Key Stage 4 are again broadly in line with national averages, and reflect students' ability. Results in GCSE French for grades A*-C were just above the national average. Those in German, the second language taken by higher attainers, were appropriately well above the average. These levels have been maintained since the last inspection. A*-G results in both languages have regularly been 100 per cent. Both boys and girls do slightly better than their respective national averages. High attainers produce for example good, detailed tourist brochures giving the history and attractions of Crewkerne. Those of more moderate skills write competently about recent work experience and the lowest attainers describe with reasonable accuracy their school day, though not at length. Students listen and read effectively at levels suitably reflecting their abilities. High attainers, especially in German, converse with some ease. Others are less confident in maintaining exchanges, but their basic message is usually unambiguous.

172. In the sixth form the proportion of students achieving grades A and B has shown a slight upward trend. Last year results in French were below average but those in German were broadly in line. Since the last inspection there has been some fluctuation in results from below to above average, but small entries render statistics unreliable. Currently attainment is broadly average. Students produce sound extended written work, showing competence also in ICT, for example in project work on fossil fuels and the German school system. They read newspaper articles extracting the main issues, for example about the recent French oil spillage. They need few prompts in English to follow authentic language at normal speed, but are somewhat hesitant when attempting to reproduce this in their own conversations. Written and spoken language is not wholly accurate but its meaning is usually quite clear.

173. Teachers use the languages extensively for all aspects of classroom life, from registrations and instructions to some aspects of grammatical explanations where students are sufficiently competent to follow them. Students thus develop good listening skills and gain confidence in using the languages naturally. All skills are regularly taught in combination, so for example sixth form students take notes in French of a talk by a classmate, then relay a summary to a third person. Year 10 students write summaries of what they have read to explain it aloud to the class, as would be likely in real-life situations. Grammar is integrated into daily studies so that students see how it ensures accurate communication. They begin to appreciate the basic ideas of how language works to help their key skills. All students have work to suit their abilities.

174. Teachers continue to work as a well-led and effective team, meeting regularly and sharing expertise. Their different talents are recognised so that, for example, those especially adept in challenging high attainers can push hard those classes which thrive under pressure, and those particularly skilled in a more pastoral approach bring out the best in classes who need more gentle nurturing. In consequence, good relationships are normal. Students and teachers get on well with each other so problems are few, and where they do arise they are usually swiftly resolved. Regular assessments help to tailor work to needs. The recognition of effort as well as academic success motivates students. Classes taking two languages in Year 9 accomplish a lot in a short time, but 100 minutes per week

for French and only 50 minutes for German is well below national guidelines, placing heavy demands on both students and teachers. Uneven distribution of lessons gives some classes long periods without exposure to the foreign languages. Students' experience of ICT is irregular in class, but much good work, accomplished at home after guidance, is in evidence on display.

175. Since the last inspection the underachievement of some lower attainers at Key Stage 4 has been improved, illustrated by good A*-G results in GCSE. For some students, speaking skills are still less confident than listening skills, but are not unsatisfactory. Similarly, writing reflects students' abilities appropriately. The positive picture of teaching and learning has been maintained. The school is addressing minor variations. Consistency in teaching approaches and progression in language are now supported by monitoring. Liaison with middle schools is improving through regular "pyramid" meetings. The French for Business course is no longer offered in the sixth form.

MUSIC

176. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with nationally expected levels, confirmed by the results of the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1999. No significant differences in attainment between boys and girls are apparent. In lessons and work sampled, Year 9 students can perform a pentatonic tune, can locate the notes of chords I, IV, and V in the key of G major and play them correctly, and devise 12 bar blues sequences using them, at a satisfactory and sometimes good standard. Students know and understand an appropriate range of technical terms and representative musical styles. Written work in notation or in words is neatly presented.

177. GCSE results for 1999 are well above national averages. Standards of performance are high. Compositions are felicitously crafted and well written. Students' written notes are reflective, and well expressed and presented. Students know and understand a better than average range of vocabulary relating to styles, chords, melodies and the musical elements generally.

178. Attainment at A level is high. In 1999, out of five students, two obtained grade B and all passed. These numbers are too small for meaningful comparisons with national averages, but they are good performances. In lessons, students show a very good grasp of fugue and related styles, and apply their knowledge successfully to the analysis of part of Mendelssohn's octet, effectively reading the score and identifying correctly significant harmonic and contrapuntal features. Standards of performance achieved are very good.

179. The quality of teaching and learning at all stages is good and sometimes very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good indeed. These lead to the good planning of lessons, with a very positive effect on students' progress. The teaching of basic musical skills at all levels is good, so that students are given a firm basis in the subject, as a foundation for good progress at Key Stage 4. The use of time and resources are good, ensuring that students get a good range of experience in the lessons. Teaching methods are effective, but sometimes do not take enough account of how well the less responsive students are actually learning. However, all students make good progress and are interested and well behaved. There is a good take-up for the subject for GCSE.

180. Ten specialist teachers visit the school to provide instrumental or vocal lessons and some 64 students take advantage of this provision (about 8% - a good proportion). The work sampled showed students achieving good standards and undoubtedly enhancing their musical attainment. For some, but by no means all, this additional tuition contributes to the

high standards of attainment in GCSE and A level examinations. Further enhancement is provided by participation in the various extra-curricular groups such as band, orchestra and choir whose concerts are much appreciated by the community. The organisation and planning of these activities are very good.

181. The department is very well managed. A wide programme is maintained, resources are well used and monitoring of the work of students is effective, encouraging good progress. The department already makes good use of ICT and is very keen to extend this. However the capitation criteria applied to the music department result in a very small amount of money being available for its needs, certainly insufficient for such a major purchase.

182. The last inspection report speaks of standards above nationally expected levels. Standards are now well above these levels at Key Stage 4. The previous good standards have been well maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

183. The school does not provide an opportunity for students to undertake an examination in sports studies, at either GCSE or A level.

184. Towards the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with nationally expected levels. Most students show sound individual skills and communicate well in team situations and when judging peer performance. They follow a well-structured health-related fitness programme and understand the basic elements of a healthy lifestyle. High attainers in Year 9 badminton lessons use good technique to out-manoeuvre opponents by varying length, width and disguise of serve. Low attaining students can plan basic warm-ups and show reasonable levels of skill, but are less effective under the pressure of a game. In badminton, they are unable to return the shuttle consistently because of poor hand-eye co-ordination. Well planned and knowledgeable teaching contributes significantly to attainment across the ability range. At Key Stage 3, in lessons seen, boys' and girls' attainment is similar.

185. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is in line with nationally expected levels. Most students in games understand the principles of attack and defence and have a satisfactory knowledge of rules. When given the opportunity, they plan effectively and perform tactics to beat opponents. Lower attainers in badminton show reasonable levels of

skill, but in basketball, a poor understanding of rules and tactics limits their effectiveness in game situations.

186. Attainment, towards the end of Year 13, is above the national average. Students in inter-house and school matches show good tactical awareness, use of space and above-average individual skills. They can effectively organise their own activities and most are able to officiate.

187. Students' learning is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Opportunities for students to judge and plan performance are improving, but remain below average. The lack of aesthetic aspects in the curriculum, due to poor indoor specialist facilities, also limits the development of independent learning. Most students' attitudes to learning are good. They listen to instructions, communicate well in group work and confidently try new skills. Relationships with teachers are good in all years.

188. Close liaison with partner middle schools aids continuity and progress at Key Stage 3. Students quickly learn new skills, basic tactics and rules, and develop knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. Students are challenged to develop their knowledge and understanding. Clear objectives are shared and students understand what they are trying to achieve and, in most lessons, how their work can be improved. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher successfully introduced badminton, across the attainment range. Use of good subject knowledge, well planned progressions and modified equipment (short rackets) for low attainers resulted in good learning.

189. At Key Stage 4, students consolidate prior learning and develop their understanding of attack and defence principles. The curriculum allows students in Years 10 and 11 to learn new activities. In a Year 10 girls' football lesson, most students developed individual skills and a basic knowledge of laws and positional demands. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into lessons and make progress in line with most others.

190. Sixth form students build on previously learnt skills and knowledge. They benefit from the increased opportunities for independent learning, by developing good standards of performance and improving their ability to referee and coach. At all stages, extension work for high attainers is readily available through extra-curricular sport, but is not often evident in lessons. Students are not provided with opportunities to enhance their learning through the use of ICT.

191. The quality of teaching at both key stages and in the sixth form is good overall. Teachers are supportive, knowledgeable and manage students well. Teachers' expectations are high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour, kit and safety. Teachers provide work adapted to students' needs, but not consistently enough across the curriculum. However, teachers' recorded assessment of students' day to day attainment is unsatisfactory. There is no real target setting from assessment details.

192. The department covers the nationally required programme, but its breadth is restricted by poor facilities and the lack of a third specialist teacher. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed, and benefits from the school's team review process in terms of the regular monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching. All appropriate policies are in place and include very good health and safety procedures. Short term planning is good, but medium and longer term plans lack detail. The department staff and a fair proportion of other teachers provide a successful extra-curricular sports and outdoor activities programme. A good percentage (40) of students participate, and this has been recognised

by a Sportsmark Award. Sporting links with the local community are well established. Individuals and teams perform successfully at district and county level. The subject makes a considerable contribution to the moral and social development of students.

193. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in standards at Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching has improved and the pace and content of lessons are more appropriate. The criteria used for assessing students are now linked to the National Curriculum, but methods used to record the subsequent information are inadequate. Facilities have not improved and remain poor. Some areas of games pitches are badly damaged by animals. The school still lacks tennis courts and a gymnasium, and the sports hall is in need of improvement. The pending joint school-community Lottery bid, if successful, will greatly improve provision across the physical education curriculum.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

194. In work seen during the inspection, students' attainments at the age of 14 are in line with expected levels for the end of Key Stage 3. They can identify the main features of the faiths studied and are developing an understanding of the concepts embodied in them. Students select information in response to questions and where the answer is factual they are generally correct. They are less successful where they are required to consider previously acquired information in order to deduce the answer, as their recall of earlier work is poor. Students have a general understanding of the composition of the Bible, but their knowledge of its contents is weak. They are aware that there may be differences in the gospel accounts of the life of Christ. They are developing an understanding of the nature of belief, and with support they can make links between belief and the life style of believers. Students study aspects of Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism in conjunction with similar aspects of Christianity.

195. The first cohort of students taking the GCSE short course in religious studies achieved grades in line with the national average in 1998. The second cohort to be entered, in 1999, achieved a higher percentage of A*-C grades. The results for boys are lower than for girls and the improvement in the GCSE results was not reflected in their grades. In work seen, students' attainments at the age of 16 are in line with national expectations. The majority of students can identify the contribution of religion to key moments of a person's life, for example at the time of birth and death, and can reflect on the effect of belief on the believer. Most students recognise that a belief will affect moral decisions made by a believer and higher attaining students can explain why, although this may not always be apparent in their written work.

196. This is the first year of the GCSE A level course. After one term of study, students are achieving levels appropriate for this stage. They are developing an understanding of the variety of philosophies studied and can make basic hypotheses regarding their effect upon attitudes and moral judgements. They are confident in their use of specialist terms and write fluently and at length. No sixth form lessons in the extension studies programme were timetabled during the inspection.

197. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen and good at Key Stage 4. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which enables them to respond to students' questions quickly and to identify inaccuracies. There is good management of students and time, and a brisk working atmosphere which encourages activity and effort. Imaginative teaching encourages students' involvement and efforts are being made to increase the use of resources for the range of abilities. Teachers' expectations of students at Key Stage 4 are high and students respond by producing work that is often well presented. Higher

attaining students produce thoughtful written assignments. The majority, however, take concepts at face value and responses are sometimes superficial. Teachers ensure good behaviour and provide good role models, listening to the opinions of all with respect. As a result the rituals and practices of others are treated with respect. Helped by good teaching, students generally learn well and make good progress, particularly when lesson objectives are clearly conveyed and pursued.

198. There is little opportunity for the use of ICT, but plans have been made to increase its use in Year 9. There is a good system of assessment which enables students to reflect on their own efforts and allows teachers to monitor students' progress. Liaison with the middle schools is good and the use of a common topic between Years 8 and 9 provides a suitable link between the schools.

199. The department has strong leadership and a clear commitment to achievement. The new GCSE short course has been well set up and is well resourced. The new A level course has developed following student requests, and the department has accommodated a variety of student demands for A and AS level study. There is a clear department handbook and schemes of work are being reviewed in the light of new developments in the subject. The head of department has oversight of the useful religious education modules introduced into the sixth form extension studies syllabus, through which the department provides a satisfactory experience of the subject for those not taking the A level examination. No such modules were being taught during the week of the inspection.

200. Since the last inspection, the time allocation for religious education has been increased. The appointment of an additional teacher provides valuable support for this developing department. Statutory requirements are now being met at all key stages.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

201. The school provides sixth form courses at intermediate and advanced levels in health and social care, leisure and tourism, and business, with an additional programme of teaching in key skills. Two lessons in leisure and tourism (mixed intermediate and advanced) were seen and four in business (three advanced and one intermediate). Health and social care lessons were not available during the inspection.

202. Results at both levels were overall in line with the national average in 1998, and rather above average in 1999. Five of the six advanced health and social care results were distinctions or merits in 1999, while three of the six business results were at this level.

203. Standards in intermediate business vary across the range of attainment expected in the course. In the lesson seen, students had a sound grasp of the organisational aspects of a company and how its departments function, and produced some accurate, thoughtful summaries of information. However, some work inspected was of a lower standard, with a limited grasp of the subject. In advanced business, standards are at least in line with expected levels and sometimes higher. Some completed units seen were of a high standard; they were often detailed, well presented and careful. Others, however, were below expected levels, with some work rather short and untidily done. In a lesson on human resources, standards were high, with a good level of subject knowledge and oral ability. In leisure and tourism, standards in lessons were also on or above average. Students contributed well informed ideas on marketing, following a visit to a leisure centre, making detailed notes and sharing information willingly.

204. Teaching in leisure and tourism is very good. Teachers have good subject

knowledge, much enthusiasm and the ability to enthuse students with the desire to learn and work productively together. Teachers manage the different levels in the group very well. As a result, students made rapid progress through the well organised stages of the lesson and used their time to reinforce what they knew by listening well to the views of others. Teaching in business is never less than satisfactory and is often good. Teachers are well informed and organised, setting students relevant tasks which help to reinforce their knowledge. Relationships are good and encourage students to work well together. The quality of teaching produces good progress and a well informed interest in the practical nature of the subjects.

205. Management of vocational subjects is good. It is marked by good knowledge of the courses and their procedures and by good preparation of coursework materials. Assessment is detailed and accurate, allowing teachers to monitor students' progress closely and to support the development of their learning. The department makes a positive contribution to the school's extensive links with business and the local community.

206. Progress has been good since the last inspection. The department now has a base and access to adequate computers, though not its own. The joint teaching of leisure and tourism does not now cause problems, though is clearly not ideal. Groups seen were of a good size. Results have improved.