

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **CAMPION SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Leamington Spa

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125745

Headteacher: Mr J Hancock

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe  
1025

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> January 2000

Inspection number: 186609

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sydenham Drive Leamington Spa Warwickshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S Hamilton
Date of previous inspection:	15 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> January 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Dr D A W Biltcliffe	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Results and achievements Teaching and learning
Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay Inspector		Attendance
Mr H Meggitt	Lay Inspector		Partnership with parents
Mr H Heller	Team inspector	Special educational needs  English as an additional language	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  School's care for pupils  Leadership and management
Mr A F Barringer	Team inspector	English  Drama	
Mr R Heath	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mr C P Hewson	Team inspector	Science	
Mrs W Burke	Team inspector	Art	
Mrs S M Mansell	Team inspector	Design and technology Information technology	
Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	Curriculum
Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History	Efficiency, accommodation and resources
Mr A E Nutton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development  Assessment  Staffing
Mr R D Gaunt	Team inspector	Physical education	
Miss M A Warner	Team inspector	Religious education	
Mr R H Crowther	Team inspector	Vocational education	

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils:	774	(smaller than average)
Pupils with English as an additional language:	16.5%	(higher than most schools)
Pupils entitled to free school meals:	21.0%	(broadly average)
Pupils on the register of special educational needs:	41.3%	(well above average)
Average number of pupils per teacher:	13.8	(well below average)
Average class size:	18.9	

The overall social and economic background of pupils in this mixed comprehensive school for 11-18 year olds is below average. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age 11 is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is very high at about three times the national average. About a quarter of the pupils come from families of ethnic minority heritage.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Campion is a satisfactory school with some very strong features. Its greatest strengths are the high quality of its teaching and the patient care given to pupils. Pupils left school in 1999 with an overall standard of achievement that was not much below what is achieved nationally – at both GCSE and GCE Advanced levels. Pupils are well taught by a hard-working staff. The school's curriculum is broad and generally balanced, but too little time is given to information technology (IT) and religious education (RE). The sixth form offers a fair range of courses, but is subsidised by the rest of the school. Pupils, including a minority who are troublesome, are treated sympathetically and very patiently. Leadership is, overall, energetic and caring. Not all policies operate consistently enough across the school, however, and there is too much dirt and litter about. Overall, the school has far more strengths than weaknesses and is on an upward path. It gives satisfactory value for money.

#### What the school does well

- Most of the school's teaching is good and a significant minority of it is outstanding.
- The school has been successful in lifting the proportion of grades A\*-C gained in GCSE to near the average level.
- Teaching staff, overall, work very hard on behalf of pupils and show great care and concern for them.
- The system of pastoral care for pupils is well structured and effectively implemented.
- It has succeeded over the last four years in raising pupils' attendance to a satisfactory level.
- The large number of pupils with special educational needs are well supported and effectively taught.
- The standard in art is very high – a beacon department. Science does well at GCSE and in the sixth form.

#### What could be improved

- The school does not sufficiently track the progress and achievements of pupils, especially in Years 7-9, or ensure that all work is pitched at the right level (especially for high attainers).
- Some boys are not doing as well as they could in Years 10-11.
- Insufficient attention is paid to keeping the school clean and tidy.
- A few statutory requirements are not met.
- The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is thin.
- The registration of sixth-formers' attendance is too haphazard.

*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 progress overall in remedying the following weaknesses identified at the 1996 inspection:

- the management of the curriculum has improved to a satisfactory level;
- pupils' reading has improved at Key Stage 3, but more remains to be done;
- the amount and use of hardware for information technology (IT) is broadly satisfactory in Years 7-9, although insufficient in Years 10-11 and within subject departments;
- most issues concerning health and safety are satisfactorily monitored; and
- pupils' attendance in Years 7-11 is now satisfactory.

Insufficient progress has, however, been made in improving the following weaknesses identified in 1996:

- the teaching of religious education (RE) does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10-13;
- the registration and tracking of sixth-formers' attendance are still inadequate;
- information about pupils' attainments and progress is too inconsistently collected and used; and
- the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

Pupils' overall standard of attainment in GCSE examinations – though not at the end of Year 9 - is higher than at the time of the last inspection. The school's teaching has improved further and is a considerable strength. The school has made unsatisfactory progress overall on remedying all the weaknesses identified in the 1996 inspection, but has shown a good capacity to continue improvement on other aspects of its practice – especially its teaching and care of pupils. More remains to be done to ensure high consistency of performance across all subjects. Despite the weaknesses noted above, the school gives a satisfactory indication overall of having the required quality of leadership and management to make sound progress in the future.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	E	D	D	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	D	

**Key**

*Well above average* A

*Above average* B

*Average* C

*Below average* D

*Well below average* E

*[Comparisons between pupils' performance in this school and the national picture need interpreting with some caution, since this school has three times the national average of pupils with special educational needs and with Statements of such need. This factor lowers its ratings against national indicators.]*

Results in the national tests in 1999 for 14 year olds in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were well below average in the school: mathematics results were a little lower than the other two subjects.



The results were below the average for schools of a similar kind (as measured by the proportions of pupils thought to be eligible for free school meals). There was not much difference between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress over Years 7 to 9.

Results in GCSE have been below the national average for the last few years, but have been on a rising trend since 1997, especially for the proportion of pupils achieving at least five grades A\*-C; the 1999 result was the school's best ever and was close to average. The overall standard in 1999 was broadly similar to that achieved in schools of a similar character – a sound performance. In the core subjects, pupils' achievement in 1999 was below average in English and mathematics, but broadly average (and a good achievement) in science. Art was by far the strongest performer amongst other subjects in GCSE over the 1997-1999 period. Mathematics, design and technology and history were the weakest subjects. Overall, pupils taking GCSE in 1999 made sound progress over the 1997-1999 period, but boys' overall performance slipped a little from Year 9 to Year 11. Pupils of ethnic minority heritage do significantly better, overall, than other pupils: nearly two-thirds of these pupils, for example, gained at least five grades A\*-C in 1999.

In the sixth form, GCE A-level results in 1999 were below average. The overall pattern, however, shows a slowly improving trend and the 1999 results were the school's highest. The school achieves few of the highest grades, but four-fifths of pupils made at least satisfactory progress (and the majority of these good progress) from their previous standard at GCSE.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Positive overall. Most pupils concentrate and try to do well; a minority are lazy and easily bored.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall (and often good). A small number of pupils are troublesome.
Personal development and relationships	Most pupils are friendly and sensitive to others.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Much improved in Years 7-11 since 1996.

#### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>aged 11-14 years</b>	<b>aged 14-16 years</b>	<b>aged over 16 years</b>
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons, good in 49 per cent and very good (or better) in 23 per cent of those seen. Three per cent of lessons had unsatisfactory teaching, but none was poor. Teaching here is better than the average. The teaching in English is good that in mathematics is satisfactory in Years 10-11, but good elsewhere. In well-taught lessons, pupils make good progress through clear explanations, a brisk pace, rigorous work and good humour. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by low intellectual demand, slow pace or insufficient control.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Fair breadth and balance, but not enough information technology (IT) and religious education (RE). Strong emphasis on literacy. Options limited in Years 10-11. Reasonable range of courses in the small sixth form. Teaching time a little low.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	A strength. School has a good reputation and practice. It handles many difficulties well. Good links with parents and agencies. Limited space.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	School's provision caters for one fifth of pupils. Specialist help achieves good results. Most pupils cope well with their studies. Overall attainment of ethnic minority pupils is significantly higher than that of other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Satisfactory on most counts, but provision for moral education is very good. School's good internal relationships underpin everything. Spiritual development is thin.
How well the school cares for its pupils	High quality of care, consistently applied. Pupils feel valued and supported. A few minor glitches. Again, a strength of the school.

The school tries hard to work closely with parents and is thoughtful in making contact with staff at all levels easy. There is satisfactory provision of careers education (good in the sixth). Teaching time is a little low. All the prescribed curriculum is offered, except for insufficient information technology and religious education at Key Stage 4 and religious education in the sixth form. Sound range of extracurricular activities.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Headteacher's professional vision and values give clear direction to the school. Senior managers conscientious and effective. Middle management variable, but sound overall. Implementation of policies and attention to detail sometimes weak.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governing body is strongly committed to the school and supportive. Takes a close interest in school's welfare, but does not closely monitor the school's performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Improved since the last inspection. Monitoring and mentoring of pupils' progress well established, but based on insufficient data and few analyses.
The strategic use of resources	Clear targets and priorities set. Careful financial planning and management, except for maintenance and major replacements.

The school has sufficient, well-qualified teachers, enough technical help (except in art and IT) and nearly enough administrative support. Its pleasant site is let down by insufficient maintenance of buildings and by dirt and litter. It has good provision of books and equipment through high spending on resources. The cost of services is examined, but not in sufficient depth.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The headteacher's efforts and approachability.</li><li>▪ The close links between home and school.</li><li>▪ The care and support of most staff.</li><li>▪ The effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The poor behaviour of a few pupils.</li></ul>

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views parents express. The headteacher, supported by his senior management team, works hard to give a clear steer to the school and focuses much effort on raising standards, keeping good discipline and forging good relationships with parents and the wider community. The school's system of pastoral care is strong, sensitive and effective - and is seen as such by pupils and their parents. The school's provision for pupils with a variety of special educational needs is comprehensive and effective.

In contrast, inspectors agree that a small proportion of pupils are difficult to manage and cause disruption in a few classes. The school's system for dealing with this problem is generally effective, but absorbs much time and patience. Overall the school's parents have a favourable view of the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The overall standard of attainment of pupils in the school is below that expected nationally of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 and a little below average at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils' achievement in national tests and examinations is well below average in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9; below average (but recently rising strongly) in GCSE examinations; and a little below average at GCE Advanced (A) level. The level of attainment in national tests in Year 9 has fallen since the last inspection of 1996, but has risen at both GCSE and GCE A-level to the highest levels achieved by the school.
2. A degree of caution needs to be exercised in judging this school's performance against the normal national criteria. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need, for example, is (at over three times the national average) very high. Two-fifths of the school's pupils are on its register of special educational needs – again, nearly three times the national average. Nearly one fifth of the pupils with English as an additional language (double the national average) are at an early stage of learning English. These circumstances inevitably lower the overall level of attainment recorded, and achievable against the usual national yardsticks, in the school.
3. On entry to the school in Year 7, pupils have an overall level of attainment that is well below what most pupils of the same age achieve across the country. For example, the proportion of pupils who attained level 4+ in the national tests at the end of primary education was only about two-thirds of the national average over the 1996-1999 period. The proportion reaching the higher level 5+ over the same period was much lower, ranging from only 15 to 40 per cent of the national average. Reading and other tests administered over the last few years tell a similar story. A minority of the school's pupils have high standards of attainment, but the majority of the school's pupils started their secondary education with standards, in varying degrees, below the national benchmark of level 4. The school's current Year 7 has the highest level of attainment of the last four years, but is still well below average overall.
4. As pupils move through the school to the end of Year 9, they generally make satisfactory progress, although their overall level of attainment remains below average. By the end of Year 11, pupils' achievements in GCSE have usually also been well below average, but have increased markedly in the last two years, albeit to a point that is a little below average. These results and the standard of work seen during the inspection point to the school sustaining pupils' attainment and progress satisfactorily as they move through the school from Year 7 to Year 11.
5. In the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 the proportion of pupils who achieved the standard of at least level 5 or level 6 was well below average in all the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. On the average "points" that pupils scored over the 1996-1999 period, their attainment in all three subjects was well below average. There was a broadly similar level in each subject, but mathematics was a little behind the other two. Overall, pupils made satisfactory progress by the end of Year 9 in 1999 from the level of attainment they had on entry to the school in 1996.
6. The performance of boys and girls was fairly similar in the 1999 national tests in Year 9. Boys did better than girls in mathematics and science, but worse in English. The overall pattern was similar in

1997 and 1998. Boys were a little closer to the national average for boys than girls were to their national average. The attainment of pupils for whom English is an additional language was at least as good as (and often better than) other pupils in 1999.

7. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 have nearly always been higher, and often much higher, than pupils have achieved in the national tests. These marked differences, which the school has inadequately investigated, indicate some weakness in judgement about standards in the core subjects in the lower part of the school.
8. When these 1999 Key Stage 3 results are compared with those in schools which have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), pupils' attainment in this school was below average. At level 5+, for example, attainment was a little below average in English, well below average in mathematics, but close to average in science. At the higher level 6+, attainment was well below average in all three core subjects – in line with the relatively small proportion of pupils of high attainment coming to the school in Year 7. Pupils' average points score in these core subjects was just below average in English and science, and well below average in mathematics.
9. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils (currently in Year 10) as average in modern foreign languages, below average in geography and history, and very low in design and technology and in information technology (IT). Inspectors concur with the assessments in geography and history, but judge that the standard of work was below (*not* well below) average in design and technology and in IT, and was a little below average in modern foreign languages.
10. In GCSE examinations in 1999 pupils' overall achievement was below average - both for pupils' average points score and for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-G. It was a little below average for the proportion gaining at least five grades A\*-C. Over the period 1994-1997 the school's performance was well below average by a broadly similar amount. Over the 1997-1999 period there has, however, been a slight rise in pupils' average points scores and a significant rise (and faster than the rising trend nationally) in the proportion of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-C.
11. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more of the higher (A\*-C) grades over the last five years was 24-38 per cent against a national average of 41-46 per cent. In 1998 the school achieved its highest average points score at GCSE and its greatest proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-G. In 1999, 38 per cent of pupils (more than ever before) gained at least five grades A\*-C. When the high percentage of pupils with special educational needs is taken into account (as noted earlier in paragraph 2), the school's proportion of the higher grades A\*-C in 1999 represents a good achievement and puts the school close to the national average. Pupils in 1999 generally made sound progress from the overall level of attainment they recorded in national tests two years earlier. Pupils of ethnic minority heritage have done significantly better than other pupils: nearly two-thirds of them in 1999, for example, gained at least five grades A\*-C. The school's targets for GCSE in 2000 are reasonable.
12. Although a minority of pupils had a high level of attainment, pupils' overall level of attainment in the core subjects in GCSE in 1999 was below the national average in English and mathematics. It was, however, average overall by national standards (and a very good achievement by the school) in science. The results were much lower than in 1998 in English, slightly lower in mathematics, but higher (and continuing a strong upward trend) in science.
13. When pupils' performances in the other subjects they took in GCSE in 1997-1999 are compared with one another, pupils did very much better in art in all three years and better in science in 1998. They did

worse than in their other subjects in mathematics, design and technology, and history. No pupil achieved the highest A\* grade in 1999, except for the very high proportion of half the candidates doing so in art.

14. Girls have achieved a much greater proportion of the higher A\*-C grades in GCSE than boys in the last three years. The gap between the sexes in gaining five or more A\*-C grades ranged from 15 to 19 percentage points over this period (a much greater difference than that found nationally), although both sexes increased their level of achievement year on year in a fairly similar way. Nearly half of the girls in 1999 gained at least five A\*-C grades, in contrast to just under a third of the boys. In the core subjects, girls performed much better than boys in English and science, but did slightly worse than boys in mathematics. Based on pupils' average points scores at GCSE, girls' results were below average in 1999, and those of boys well below average – a relative decline for boys from their overall performance by the end of Year 9. The school is aware of these different trends between the sexes and has undertaken a survey into the issue, but its early efforts have not yet narrowed the gap.
15. When the school's results at GCSE in 1999 are compared with those in schools with a similar "free school meals" background, this school's performance was sound. Its proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C was above average. This represents a good level of achievement. Its rating was average for the proportion gaining one A\*-G and for its average points score, but well below average for the proportion gaining five or more grades A\*-G. This last judgement is largely explained by the very high proportion of pupils with varying degrees of special educational needs. The ratings also do not take into account the fact that the school's intake has contained much lower proportions than usual of high-attaining pupils.
16. In the sixth form, overall results at GCE A-level for those pupils entered for two or more subjects have been well below average over the 1994-1998 period. They reached their highest level, however, in 1999, when pupils' average points score was three-quarters of the national average (up from just over half, for example, in 1996). In 1999 both the pass rate (80 per cent compared with the national rate of 88 per cent) and the quality of grades obtained were below average, but on a rising trend. Most of the top (A) grades obtained in the 1997-1999 period have been in one subject (art).
17. Pupils' performances at GCE A-level in 1999, however, showed at least satisfactory progress in most cases from their earlier achievements at GCSE. Although one fifth of pupils made insufficient progress, three-fifths made good progress from their level of attainment two years earlier and one fifth made satisfactory progress. The level of attainment in the sixth form on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) programmes at Foundation or Intermediate levels is close to average.
18. In work seen during the inspection in Years 7-11, pupils' standard of attainment varied from above to well below average, but overall is below that expected nationally for pupils of similar ages. Attainment is broadly similar throughout the school, but slightly higher in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Attainment in the sixth form is broadly average.
19. In English, high-attaining pupils generally produce work of a good standard. The overall attainment of pupils is, however, below average by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils' standard of reading is close to average at both key stages: it is lifted in Key Stage 3 by a concerted and effective emphasis on literacy, particularly in Year 7. Most high-attaining pupils produce written work of high quality, but the overall standard is below average in structure, content, layout and range. Pupils' speaking is broadly average in clarity and expression, but most pupils are not confident at explaining or discussing issues at length. With exceptions, pupils generally listen carefully to their teachers. Attainment in the sixth form is average.

20. Across the school, pupils' overall standard of reading is close to average in fluency and accuracy in most subjects. Most pupils have reasonable competence at undertaking research from books for content or meaning. The overall standard, however, of pupils' recall or interpreting the significance of what they have read is below average. There is more emphasis in this school on pupils reading aloud in class than is often found. The school's increasing emphasis on literacy enables pupils to make sound progress in their reading. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language generally make satisfactory progress.
21. Pupils' standard of writing varies very widely from good to poor, but is below average overall. Pupils gain good experience of writing for many different purposes, such as conveying information, undertaking research or expressing their views and feelings. A significant minority of writing is very capable and persuasive – such as when Year 9 pupils in a top set in history captured very well the flavour of the period through their “letters” about slavery. The presentation, punctuation and spelling of written work – and particularly that of some boys – are, however, below average overall. Note-taking is infrequently practised or given training, although some older pupils (as, for example, sixth-formers in psychology and economics) are very capable of extracting significant points from articles.
22. Most pupils listen and concentrate reasonably in lessons. A significant minority, however, easily “switch off” and become listless, requiring hard work from teachers to keep them firmly on task. Pupils' standard of speaking is usually average at best. Most pupils are below average in the clarity, accuracy and expressiveness of their speech and in their use of specialist vocabulary. A minority of pupils, however, are very articulate. A top set in Year 9 in geography, for example, made exceptionally fluent and cogent presentations to others, based on thorough preparation and a precise use of technical language. Few pupils, however, discuss issues at length and many find some difficulty in tying ideas together constructively.
23. In mathematics and in numeracy across the curriculum the overall standard of attainment is below average. Most pupils handle basic calculations reasonably, but often lack confidence in solving new problems and require frequent reminders about past work. Pupils generally use measures well and know standard units and abbreviations. The use and interpretation of data are of a satisfactory standard. Overall, however, pupils do not have a strong feel for the significance of numbers and are overdependent on the use of calculators. This weakness also applies to the sixth form, although attainment is broadly average overall.
24. Attainment in science is below average at the end of Year 9, but is average by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Pupils handle experiments well and have at least a basic grasp of the subject, but the majority have a weak knowledge of chemistry. Only a minority form a coherent picture of their scientific studies. Attainment in IT is a little below average in the taught courses in Years 7-9; below average in Years 10-11, because of insufficient experience in class-based subjects; and broadly average in the sixth form.
25. In other subjects, the overall attainment of pupils is below what pupils achieve nationally. Their attainments are, however, average by the end of Key Stage 3 in physical education (PE) and religious education (RE), and by the end of Key Stage 4 in music, PE and RE. Standards are average in the sixth form in geography, history and vocational studies. Attainment is below average at the end of Key Stage 3 in design and technology and in music; throughout Years 7-11 in geography and history; and at all stages of the school in modern foreign languages. Attainment in art is a beacon in the school – above average by the end of Year 9 and of an excellent standard by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form.

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

26. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are positive overall. There is, however, a small but significant minority of pupils who find it difficult to comply with the school's framework of discipline. These pupils require considerable effort and support from staff to help them to take up the good opportunities presented to them.
27. Most pupils are keen to attend school, and enjoy the work and activities provided. Pupils are generally well behaved in class, showing good (and often very good) attitudes in two-thirds of lessons. In about one in ten of the lessons in the main school, however, pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory. In these, pupils fail to settle (or to settle quickly) and do not show adequate concentration; a small number create distractions which prevent the whole class from establishing a good working ethos. In the best lessons, however, including those with pupils whose attainment is very low, teachers gain immediate attention and enthusiasm through their careful planning and energetic approach to the work.
28. Pupils are generally courteous and trustworthy and behave well around the school. There are, however, a few aspects of pupils' conduct which detract from this overall positive picture. There are sometimes unsightly and offensive graffiti on school furniture and on other surfaces, including the interior of pupils' lavatories. The overall level of cleanliness is often unsatisfactory, with large amounts of litter across the site.
29. The working atmosphere in the school is usually positive. Pupils generally show regard and sensitivity for one another's feelings and well-being. There are, nevertheless, reports from pupils of a few episodes of bullying, some of which are said to recur, despite the vigorous intervention of staff. There is no evidence of any significant aggression motivated by racism or sexism. The number of permanent exclusions (four in the last school year) is average for a school of this size. The number of fixed-period exclusions (68) is relatively high, but this sanction is carefully applied.
30. Most pupils form constructive relationships with one another, with their teachers and with other adults. A large proportion of the pupils who find difficulty in maintaining such positive attitudes are included on the register of special educational needs; the school works very hard to help these pupils to find more appropriate ways of forming relationships. Pupils show respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. They share in the successes of their peers and applaud others' efforts and achievements.
31. Where opportunities are offered, both in class and beyond, pupils show a clear capacity to assume responsibility. There are, for example, school receptionists, library assistants, and both year and whole-school councils of pupil representatives. Older pupils have officiated at a variety of events, including giving support to the summer projects on literacy and acting as hosts at open evenings. They have also been involved in community projects from time to time.
32. The attendance of pupils is broadly satisfactory overall and is in line with the average pattern of attendance nationally. In the 1998-1999 academic year pupils' overall attendance was 91.5 per cent, very close to the national average of 91.0 per cent. The level of pupils' attendance has risen steadily and significantly over the period 1995-1999 and has moved from an unsatisfactory to a satisfactory position. In the autumn term of the current academic year the level of attendance was sustained at the satisfactory figure of 91.0 per cent overall, although attendance in Year 10 was at the unsatisfactory figure of 87.4 per cent.



33. The level of authorised absence in 1998-1999 (7.8 per cent) was in line with the national average. The amount of absence without good reason (0.6 per cent) was a little below average; it has been significantly reduced over the last four years, as a result of the school's considerable efforts and its effective management of attendance. In particular, the school has devoted significant personnel and time to tackling absences at a very early stage and with effective computerisation and telephone backup. Examination of attendance registers and other evidence suggests that any unauthorised absence is owing to a small number of pupils having very low attendance. There is intermittent attendance by a small minority of pupils, especially in Year 10.
34. At the last inspection weaknesses were identified in the school's registration of sixth formers. Weaknesses remain in the accuracy and consistency of recording the attendance of these pupils. The result is uncertainty about the statistics of attendance and (sometimes) the location of these pupils. Existing data suggests unsatisfactory attendance in Year 12.
35. Although the school's prospectus does not indicate to parents or pupils the importance of good attendance and punctuality, the school puts considerable emphasis on pupils attending regularly and punctually. Registration is, in the main, done accurately and tidily. The school has a thorough and effective computerised system for analysing pupils' attendance. It uses its data well to explain, individually, to any pupils prone to unauthorised absence the error of their ways.
36. Pupils' punctuality for school is satisfactory overall. Punctuality for lessons is generally good. The practice of allowing younger pupils to leave class early to take lunch is both wasteful of time and disruptive to other classes. The school has satisfactory systems in place to combat truancy.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

37. The quality of teaching is good overall and is an important strength of the school. It is the major factor in securing a purposeful atmosphere in lessons, keeping pupils on task and in giving them a sound quality of education. The quality of teaching has risen since the last inspection. In 1996, for example, about 90 per cent of the teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory. At this inspection satisfactory (or better) teaching was seen in 97 per cent of lessons. The proportion of good and very good teaching is higher in this school than is normally found.
38. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in about a quarter of all lessons seen and was good in nearly half of them. Additionally, almost a quarter of the school's teaching was very good. It was occasionally outstanding. Only three per cent of the lessons inspected had teaching that was unsatisfactory. None of the teaching was poor. The quality of teaching is very similar throughout the school. The teaching both of pupils with special educational needs and of pupils for whom English is an additional language is well organised and effective, enabling most of these pupils to make sound progress.
39. Most teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach. They usually give very clear introductions to lessons and ensure that pupils receive a clear view of what is to be learned. They often make appropriate reference to broader aspects of their subjects, so that pupils get a comprehensive picture of the content of, and reasons for, their studies. They generally help pupils well to focus on important issues, tackle problems systematically or understand the significance of their studies. In English lessons in Year 13 on Sheridan's *The Rivals* and John Donne's *Witchcraft by a Picture*, for example, the teachers' considerable knowledge of the texts deepened pupils' understanding considerably and gave them increased confidence to handle evidence and contribute their own views. The majority of teachers encourage precision in the use of specialist language.

40. Lessons are nearly always thoroughly planned. A brisk revision of previous work is usually followed by careful explanation of new material. Teachers often set time-limits for different activities, share them with pupils, and keep well to them. Most lessons end with an appropriately brisk and comprehensive review in the last few minutes of what has been learned. In only a few lessons is the introduction unclear, the organisation vague or the concluding summary omitted.
41. Many teachers set reasonably high standards for pupils. In the best lessons they pose appropriately rigorous and probing questions, ensure that pupils have to think carefully and encourage them to formulate detailed answers. They discourage woolly thinking, muttered answers, sloppy expressions or superficial work. In an art lesson in Year 8, for instance, excellent teaching ensured that pupils' work on the human eye was accurate, experimental, absorbing and fun. In another Year 8 lesson in mathematics similar outstanding teaching was successful in encouraging the whole class of low-attaining pupils to express their ideas about bar charts clearly, pushing them further with probing questions and good humour. The teachers' emphasis on precise language and ideas stimulated pupils also to value these qualities.
42. In a minority of lessons, in contrast, teachers' questions do not demand enough of pupils, leaving them uninterested, coasting and sometimes restless. In science and modern foreign languages in Years 7-9, and in geography and history in Years 7-11, work is often insufficiently demanding for higher-attaining pupils. In mathematics the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs in some classes has a tendency to lower all round expectations of what pupils can do.
43. Most teachers use a good range of effective teaching methods. They usually explain the purpose and main features of lessons to the whole class, spend a suitable amount of time investigating issues through work in pairs or small groups and draw issues together across the whole class. They help pupils to work constructively together, give praise when it is deserved, and try to make learning enjoyable. In a few lessons good use is made of "brainstorming" and quick summaries on the board, but pupils rarely make notes for class discussion. In a significant minority of cases pupils easily become restless, and sometimes disruptive, towards the end of lessons (and occasionally from early on), particularly if the teacher does not maintain the pace of learning or introduce sufficient variety into learning tasks.
44. A significant minority of pupils are easily distracted, lack a degree of self-control and tend to be slow to settle down to work. Teachers in this school work hard and use a high level of professional skill to keep many pupils on task and to secure the sound quality of learning generally found. In most lessons they skilfully maintain good behaviour, positive attitudes, firm discipline and a brisk rate of work. Teachers' relationships with pupils are generally warm, encouraging, good-humoured and very patient. Pupils are well supported. Teachers' control of classes nearly always has a friendly firmness. Very occasionally, backchat is accepted with insufficient reprimand or a high level of background noise disturbs the smooth work of classes, but most pupils respond positively to teachers' admonishments.
45. Most lessons begin on time and proceed at an appropriately brisk pace. Many teachers cover a considerable amount of ground in the time available and make appropriate use of illustrative material. Classroom support assistants are generally used well. The practice of allowing the youngest pupils to leave lessons early in order to be at the front of the lunch-queue, however, loses important teaching time. Teachers' assessments in class and marking are usually carefully done, and pupils are usually offered sound feedback on how they can improve their work.
46. Teaching is noticeably good throughout the school. It is satisfactory in science and music in Key Stage 3; in mathematics, geography and history in Key Stage 4; and in design and technology, geography and

IT in the sixth form. Information technology is not taught well enough across subjects in Years 7-11, but is good in timetabled lessons in Key Stage 3. Teaching is very good in RE in Key Stage 4 and in art in Key Stage 3. The teaching of art is outstanding in the rest of the school. In all other subjects and stages teaching is good. Nearly all subjects have at least some teaching that is very good, and at least a quarter of it is of this high quality in Years 9-11 and in Year 13. Homework is generally set appropriately to reinforce or extend what has been learned in school.

47. Staff for the GNVQ courses in the sixth form are well organised, plan thoroughly and assess pupils' work carefully. They have good subject knowledge and support pupils well. Good use is made of part-time staff, including some with commercial experience, and of well-integrated work experience.
48. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning both in lessons and over longer periods of time. In two-fifths of classes pupils' learning is of a high order and in a further one in eight lessons it is very good. The quality of learning is below a reasonable level in about five per cent of classes. Pupils make a similar rate of progress in their studies as they move through the school. Girls, in general, make greater progress than boys. This greater progress by girls is more marked at Key Stage 4, because they tend to sustain concentration better and work a little harder at this crucial stage leading up to external examinations.
49. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning in Key Stage 3 in English, science, design and technology, and music; in Key Stage 4 in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and history; and in the sixth form in English, history and IT. They do not learn enough in IT in Years 7-11. The rate and depth of their learning is very good in Key Stage 4 in art, music and RE. Progress and learning are outstanding in the sixth form in art.
50. Pupils learn much in their studies when they concentrate, show interest and try hard to do well. The school's teaching prompts pupils strongly to develop these qualities, despite a significant minority of pupils who display an underwhelming tendency to do so. Teachers work hard – and with a degree of success – to raise pupils' aspirations and inculcate a love of learning.

## **PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

51. A significant proportion of the school's efforts and resources is devoted to providing for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). The incidence of pupils with statements of special educational need is, at over eight per cent, three times the national rate, whilst the number of pupils with a significant degree of additional need (registered at Stage 3 or above, according to the Code of Practice) amounts to 185, over a quarter of the school's pupils in Years 7 - 11. Of these some 68 pupils are assessed as having pronounced emotional or behavioural difficulties (EBD) – a large proportion for a school of this size.
52. These high proportions result from the school's growing reputation and expertise in making good provision for pupils with a wide range of educational needs, including some with complex conditions. Many pupils come from outside the school's admission zone at parental request. This specialised provision has been encouraged and supported by the local education authority. The school's organisation for such work was restructured in September 1999, when it withdrew from a local consortium, in order to provide for its needs from its own resources. It has a generally satisfactory spread of expertise available to it. The amount of counselling and psychological support is, however, low for pupils with EBD.
53. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in their learning. In their subject lessons they are usually taught in smaller groups and often receive individual or group

support from an additional teacher or special support assistant (SSA). The learning and attitudes of pupils with EBD are generally sound in small groups or when supported by additional teachers or SSAs. The management of these pupils is sometimes taxing when they do not receive such support.

54. In each of Years 8 and 9 about 30 pupils who experience particular difficulty with literacy have additional intensive teaching in place of a second foreign language. Most pupils thrive on this provision and their literacy shows marked improvement. Within this system of withdrawal are found separate groups of pupils with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), who receive help targeted at their particular difficulties. Their capacity to read, spell and manage the demands of the wider curriculum are, in most cases, significantly enhanced. Constraints imposed by the timetable, however, mean that, within this system of withdrawal, pupils are often taught by different teachers in the two periods concerned. This reduces continuity of progress and the close assessment of pupils' gains in learning. Those pupils with more complex conditions (such as autism) receive appropriate teaching designed to improve their emotional and communication skills. They respond positively to such intervention.
55. Overall, pupils enjoy working in the Learning Support areas and value the teaching and support they receive. They are realistic about their progress and do not regard this additional help as a sign of stigma or dependence. Their attitudes to work are generally positive: they often show a good capacity to concentrate and work steadily over a full period. They appreciate and acknowledge the care and devotion extended to them by both teaching and support staff.
56. Teaching is always sound and often good. Teachers, by qualification or significant experience, are well suited to their roles and deploy a wide range of specialist techniques and resources to meet pupils' individual needs. The SSAs show similar application and some have developed specialisms in working with specific aspects of special need.
57. A group of subject representatives meets with SEN staff to ensure that subject areas contribute appropriately to this work across the curriculum. Whilst positive initiatives have been taken to adapt teaching materials and approaches within some subject areas, work across the school overall insufficiently matches the needs of pupils of different abilities. There is, for example, insufficient extension or enrichment material designed for the most able pupils in some mixed-ability classes.
58. The level of liaison between pastoral staff, SEN staff and the wider body of teaching staff has many satisfactory features in meeting the needs of pupils with EBD. Individual Behaviour Plans (IBPs) are drawn up by key tutors to support work with pupils whose difficulties are predominantly behavioural. The recording and referral of incidents of poor behaviour are well managed. The school has a generally satisfactory whole-school policy for managing the behaviour of these pupils and puts much effort into assisting them. Its policy indicates for staff a wide range of ways for improving the behaviour of these pupils, but does not have sufficient integration of practice across all staff or an adequate training programme to implement all the good ideas contained in it.
59. Specialist resources and equipment, including IT provision, are of sound quality and range, although they are usually restricted to pupils with the most serious needs. The base designated for the Learning Support provision is well used, but too small to accommodate the many uses it carries - teaching areas, meeting room, resource base, office and social area. In addition, many of the small groups described above have no settled base and have to travel around the school, often working in unsuitable surroundings. This impedes the continuity of experience such pupils need.
60. The school works well with its contributory primary schools in making the transition to the secondary phase a comfortable experience. Similarly, staff of the educational psychology

department collaborate well with the school in planning and, in general, providing for special educational needs.

61. Parents are kept fully informed about their children's progress, and the school makes considerable effort to involve them in planning for their children's provision. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for pupils with statements are of good quality and are regularly reviewed. The IEPs for those at Stage 3 of the Register, however, are not currently being updated and are therefore not available, as they should be, to staff across the school. This limits the range of provision for these pupils.
62. The Learning Support department is efficiently managed. There is appropriate joint planning by teachers and SSAs, with a close attention to producing practical solutions for individual pupils' needs. The school complies with the provisions of the national Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs. The visible identification of the headteacher with the work of this department has been both a stimulus and support to its successful work. The policy of inclusiveness which he espouses is strongly supported by the governing body.

### **ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE**

63. The number of pupils in the school from ethnic minority backgrounds (largely from the Indian sub-continent) is 162, or a fifth of the school's roll. Twenty-three of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Over the past two years, additional special provision has been made for a small number of children of refugees or migrant workers from the Balkans and southern Europe.
64. The school's analysis of attainment indicates that the large majority of pupils from families whose home language is not English now cope well with the demands of the curriculum. The attainment of these pupils is at least as good as that of pupils from English-speaking homes. The overall attainment of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is significantly higher than that of other pupils: in GCSE in 1999, for example, nearly two-thirds of these pupils gained at least five grades A\*-C, compared with under two-fifths of the year group as a whole.
65. The school's provision for this group of pupils has three elements. Firstly, specialist teaching and support for the needs of those with little or no English are provided on an individual basis and modified as linguistic skills develop. This provision is carefully matched to individual progress and achieves good results in reading, use of language and fluency. The second component is a programme of home-school liaison and visiting which involves parents and families closely in the educational progress of their children. The third element is the inclusion in the programme of personal, social and religious education (PSRE) of material illustrating the nature of culture and beliefs represented by pupils attending the school.
66. The school's detailed analysis of these pupils' overall educational progress, including linguistic use and achievements at the end of key stages, indicates that this programme is effective in involving parents in the work of the school and in giving such pupils the opportunity to achieve to their potential.

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

67. The breadth and balance of the curriculum are satisfactory overall throughout the school. At Key Stage 3 the curriculum provides a good range of opportunities for learning which address the needs of all the pupils. All subjects of the National Curriculum and RE are appropriately covered. All pupils study drama as part of their English course, as well as personal and social education (PSE).

The majority of pupils study two modern foreign languages in Years 8 and 9; additional literacy work is provided for those who study only one language.

68. A strength of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is the provision to improve skills in literacy. All pupils follow a literacy scheme in Year 7, and this continues in Years 8 and 9 as part of their course in English. This provision is closely coordinated with work undertaken in contributory primary schools and at the Summer School. The school is working effectively towards extending this initiative across all subject areas. A numeracy strategy is being established, but this has not currently been formally extended beyond the mathematics department.
69. At Key Stage 4 there is a satisfactory range of curricular provision, except for IT and RE. All pupils study the core subjects (including double science), design and technology, and PE. The majority take PSE. Those pupils taking two modern foreign languages are unable to take PSE, and two of their lessons take place before the time school normally starts. No courses for the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) are offered, to provide a link with those at the post-16 stage. Pupils' choice of two optional subjects is restricted to one humanities subject and one creative arts subject, so that, for example, no pupil can take geography and history, or art and music.
70. Curricular provision for pupils in the sixth form is satisfactory. The range of courses leading to GCE A-level examinations is reviewed each year to meet the requirements of pupils. Courses for GNVQ are provided to Foundation level in health and social care and to Foundation and Intermediate levels in business studies. In addition, all pupils follow an accredited course in key skills; this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. No PE is timetabled for pupils in the sixth form. The sixth-form courses are provided at some cost to the rest of the school, since there are small numbers of pupils in most groups.
71. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, except in IT at Key Stage 4 and RE at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. These were omissions at the time of the last inspection. There is no timetabled provision for IT for that half of the pupils who do not follow the GCSE course. Provision in other subjects across the curriculum is inconsistent and insufficient to enable these pupils to acquire the full range of IT skills needed to meet statutory requirements. No time is allocated to RE for any pupils at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form.
72. The total teaching time each week of 24 hours is below the minimum of 25 hours at Key Stage 4 recommended by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). This shortfall puts pressure on the school in trying to provide sufficient IT and RE in Years 10-11. Time is further eroded in Years 7-8 by pupils' early leaving for lunch. During the period of the inspection appropriate homework was set and it was marked. The school provides guidelines for the use of tutorial time, but during the inspection the provision was inconsistent and, overall, not a good use of time.
73. All pupils have access to all subjects of the curriculum. The arrangements for teaching pupils in classes of similar attainment in most subjects are generally effective. In design and technology, geography, history, and modern foreign languages they are inappropriate because of the large numbers of pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties grouped in individual classes. The match of work to the differing needs of pupils is generally satisfactory, except in science, design and technology, and modern foreign languages. Higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough and opportunities are missed to raise their standards of achievement further in mathematics, science, geography, IT and modern foreign languages. Appropriate alternative accreditation is offered in a limited range of subjects, including English, mathematics, geography and history. A group of four

pupils is sensibly disappplied from the National Curriculum in Year 10 and is piloting a course in life skills.

74. The procedures and structures for curricular planning are satisfactory. A clear curriculum policy has improved the focus of planning since the last inspection. Procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum are good, through sound links between the senior management team and individual departments and a sound system of curricular review. Schemes of work are good in English, science, geography and music, and satisfactory elsewhere, except in design and technology and history where they are poor. Curricular links to ensure effective continuity with contributory primary schools are very good where they are part of the project to raise the standards of literacy, but elsewhere they are not good enough, resulting in slow progress in Year 7 in many subjects, including mathematics and science.
75. A sound range of extracurricular activities enhances the curriculum. Out-of-school activities include visits to Germany and The Gambia. Pupils in Year 12 participate in a very successful residential course in Derbyshire. Each year a large number of pupils takes part in a very successful music and drama production. Pupils have the opportunity to be involved in a range of activities during “enrichment time” after school each Wednesday afternoon. Included in this provision is support for homework, GCSE coursework and revision for examinations. Over one third of pupils take part in inter-school competitive sports. Three times as many boys as girls take part, because fewer opportunities are provided for girls. There is a strong commitment from six members of staff, only one of whom is female.
76. The provision for careers education and guidance is broadly satisfactory. A suitable scheme for careers education at Key Stages 3 and 4 is organised by the careers coordinator and is taught within the PSE course. The coordinator, however, neither teaches nor has the opportunity to monitor this work systematically. In the sixth form the well-structured and successful programme, which includes visits to local universities, is mainly taught in Year 13 and is coordinated and taught by sixth-form tutors. Impartial careers guidance of good quality is given by the careers service. The programme of guidance is very comprehensive and includes those who have most need in Years 9 and 10; it covers all pupils in Year 11. Sixth-form pupils greatly appreciate the guidance of good quality which they receive.
77. All pupils in Year 11 participate for two weeks in a generally well-organised programme of work experience. Opportunities are missed, however, during the time pupils prepare for this experience to strengthen their knowledge of job applications, selection and workplace procedures. During the placement pupils are visited by a member of staff and complete a diary. Immediately before and after the placement the English department effectively supports pupils in writing letters, completing the diary and in follow-up work. A satisfactory careers library forms part of the main school library and includes appropriate information available on computer. A suitable library containing information about courses in higher education is situated in the sixth-form area.
78. The school’s provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. The promotion of pupils’ spiritual development, however, is unsatisfactory. This was a weakness that was identified in the previous inspection. The school has made good progress in improving the provision for RE at Key Stage 3, but its provision for pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form remains unsatisfactory.
79. Where RE is provided, pupils are given suitable opportunities for quiet reflection. Pupils study Christianity and the other main faiths. Recently a special event, *Focus on Faith*, was held, during which pupils studied and discussed important aspects of Christian and Sikh beliefs and traditions,

and joined together in a special lunch. Within the whole school there is a spiritual dimension in the care that staff take of individual pupils. Much time is spent in counselling pupils who experience emotional problems. Spiritual development is not well promoted across the whole curriculum. It is, however, very evident in art, where pupils experience the beauty of form, colour and texture.

80. Provision for pupils' moral education is very good. The school's system of rewards and sanctions works well. Most teachers, however, adopt a policy of encouraging good behaviour based on pupils' developing an understanding of acceptable conduct. Teachers are especially vigilant, both in lessons and at other times, in monitoring and encouraging good behaviour. Pupils' understanding of notions of right and wrong is reinforced by the themes presented in assemblies, in PSE and through RE. These themes include tolerance, respect for diversity, and human relationships. Pupils also encounter moral themes in other subjects – such as judging the actions of others in their study of *Macbeth*, fair play and competition in team games, and learning about the holocaust in history.
81. Pupils' social development is promoted satisfactorily overall. Good relationships are fostered and maintained amongst the groups of pupils of different ethnic origin. They are also promoted in a reasonable range of extracurricular activities, especially in sport, dance, drama and music. The regular musical productions particularly provide very good social opportunities for about one fifth of the school's pupils. In these productions, pupils also enjoy positive social experiences in working with the staff who are involved. The school organises a number of educational visits, including residential experience at outward bound centres in Derbyshire and Shropshire. There is also a good range of linguistic and cultural visits to Europe, Africa and Asia.
82. Modest opportunities are provided for pupils to experience responsibility. These include duties as school receptionists, assistance at open evenings, and membership of year and school councils. Up to 17 pupils work as assistant librarians and a small number of older pupils help to teach pupils in Key Stage 3.
83. The school's physical provision is a weakness in the underpinning of its social education. The buildings and site have many attractive features, but they are poorly cleaned and maintained. There is an abundance of litter around the site and, in both public and more private spaces, some unpleasant graffiti. There are no designated social spaces for pupils to use at breaks and lunchtimes, except for the sixth form.
84. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school fosters good relationships and discussion amongst all its pupils, and opportunities for sharing the art and traditions of different cultures are created where possible. These are especially evident in art and music, where products and performances which emanate from various cultures are promoted. In music many pupils play in the steel band and in blues, rock and Indian classical music ensembles. In English, pupils learn about the social and political issues of Shakespeare's England in preparation for a study of his plays. The school is developing exchange visits with a contrasting community in Sweden; these, together with visits to India and The Gambia, provide valuable insights into cultural diversity for a significant number of pupils.
85. The school is far short of meeting the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all its pupils. This remains a substantial gap, as it did at the time of the last inspection.

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

86. Overall, the school provides a positive environment in which pupils feel valued and supported by staff. For many pupils the school is a haven. The high quality of its care is consistently applied,



even to those pupils who find it difficult to comply with the school's norms of behaviour and framework of discipline.

87. In a small number of aspects, however, the school fails to maintain a consistently high level of health and safety. The condition of the medical room is unsatisfactory, and pupils who are ill sometimes have to await attention in public areas. The condition of some of the pupils' lavatories is unsatisfactory and they are sometimes closed to pupils because of vandalism. There are some uneven and hazardous surfaces in external areas. A large amount of dirt is carried into the school building from outside, partly because of poor or non-existent barrier-matting.
88. The governing body's sub-group on health and safety has a programme of monitoring visits to assess different areas of the school, and the health and safety policy has recently been revised and updated. Assessments of risk have been carried out across the school, but the intervals between these activities and the follow-up action are not programmed on a sufficiently regular and comprehensive basis.
89. Arrangements for child protection are sound. One of the deputy headteachers is the designated person for this responsibility and ensures that procedures are in line with the requirements of the Area Child Protection Committee. Staff are aware of the necessary steps to take if action is required, and are regularly updated on their responsibilities. The governing body does not, however, monitor this area of work systematically.
90. Measures to promote good attendance are effective. The school's behaviour and disciplinary systems are good and sensibly applied. Pupils know where they stand and generally respect the framework of rewards and sanctions. Positive measures, including support and counselling, are made available, in addition to a well-graduated scale of punishments.
91. Provision for PSE has recently been reviewed. It is generally well programmed and soundly delivered. Pupils studying two modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4 (about 20 in each of Years 10 and 11), however, are unable to attend PSE lessons, thereby losing access to an important element of their curricular entitlement.
92. The school provides good support and advice for pupils. This is well managed by a strong team of pastoral leaders, who are coordinated by the three deputy headteachers. Staff work hard and effectively to provide appropriate care and support, and practise positive teamwork and collaboration. Together with the form tutors, they closely monitor the personal development, behaviour and attendance of all pupils. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance, however, are not consistently sound. All pupils in Year 11 have a personal mentor to help them to identify and meet academic targets; data on pupils' academic attainments is collected, but it is not organised and used in a systematic way across the school.
93. The number of pupils in the school with statements of special educational need is more than three times the national average. There is generally a good match between the provision made by the school for this large number of pupils and the requirements of their statements. The school ensures that it can respond flexibly, by reserving a contingency fund from which to provide for any emerging or changing needs not covered in the pupils' statements.
94. The school's assessment policy provides satisfactory guidance on the assessment, marking, recording and reporting of pupils' work. Within most subject departments the quality of day-to-day assessment of individual pupils' work is satisfactory overall, but there are weaknesses in design and technology and in IT. The quality of assessment in art is very good. In English, geography and

music the marking and recording of pupils' work are good. In mathematics, data from both Key Stage 2 and internal tests is used well in Year 7 to organise pupils into classes and to diagnose individual pupils' difficulties. In science, design and technology, PE and RE, however, insufficient use is made of assessment information for monitoring curricular planning and effecting any necessary changes. Overall, pupils' work is marked well.

95. In Key Stage 3, assessments of pupils' work relate satisfactorily to National Curriculum levels of study. Assessments in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form relate firmly to the requirements of external examinations. As a consequence, they give clear indications of the progress that pupils make and provide targets for improvement. Although subject departments adopt different procedures in assessing pupils' work, some consistency is maintained across the school by the use of a common system of grading which is clear to pupils, teachers and parents. This system is not, however, based on criteria that can be consistently interpreted.
96. Although the procedures for assessment are satisfactory, the school makes unsatisfactory use of the data from assessments either to compare the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils across subjects and year-groups, or to monitor the long-term progress of individual pupils. These aspects of assessment were reported as weaknesses in the last inspection. Some improvement has been made since 1996, but more remains to be done.
97. Records of achievement include a collation of pupils' assessment data from Year 7 onwards and are finally completed in Year 11. These provide appropriate information about the targets set for pupils' personal achievement, evidence of any achievements outside class, and pupils' evaluations of their own success. Assessment procedures and practice are good for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language,

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

98. The last inspection reported that the school worked hard to involve parents in its work. It continues to do this. It has secured, for example, a high level of attendance at parents' evenings, provides a well-organised induction programme for new pupils and parents, and gives parents easy access to staff. Telephone contacts between parents and the school are thoughtfully organised. The pre-inspection parental questionnaire, in general, also indicated a good level of satisfaction with the school, as indicated in the data after paragraph 124.
99. The school's prospectus and options booklets for Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are clear and well-presented documents. In contrast, parents are provided with little detail of what is taught in each subject in Years 7-9. There is very little involvement of parents in supporting the curricular work of the school and there is no parents' association. The school has a newsletter for parents, but not on a regular basis. The local press, however, regularly publishes interesting features about the school's activities. The school's theatrical productions provide the major extracurricular attraction for parents.
100. Reports to parents about pupils have been developed in close consultation with parents. The interim and annual reports to parents are presented in a common format, but there remain inconsistencies in the way National Curriculum levels are shown. The reports do not convey fully comparable information about pupils' attainment, rate of progress or grades in clear and simple terms, or consistently indicate what pupils need to do in order to improve. In some subjects educational jargon is used when describing the work pupils have done. Insufficient reference to pupils' progress was a key aspect for improvement in the last inspection report.

101. The establishment of a formal home-school agreement is still at the consultative stage, with the governors seeking feedback at parents' evenings. The school readily arranges additional home visits, where appropriate. This facility and the ready access given to teachers at all levels of responsibility are widely seen as good features of the school.
102. The school is also closely involved in a number of community initiatives aimed at promoting family learning and home study. These activities are seen as important ways in which the school can encourage greater parental contribution to pupils' learning. Overall, parents express a good degree of satisfaction with most aspects of the school's work.

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

103. The leadership of the school is generally of a good quality and management procedures are broadly effective. The leadership of the headteacher makes a strong personal contribution to the success of the school in its wider community. The management systems required to underpin this vision, however, are not fully in place across the school.
104. The headteacher is an experienced and highly committed, professional leader, who has a clear vision and a strong set of underlying values. He is widely accessible to pupils, parents, staff and governors, and places firm emphasis on consultation with all these partner-groups. He encourages considerable delegation of responsibilities, as well as the close involvement of senior staff in the day-to-day work of the school. Whilst responsibility is widely dispersed across the school, the effects of such delegation are not systematically reviewed. This leads to some inconsistency in approach and limits the effectiveness of some otherwise worthwhile initiatives.
105. The four members of the senior management team (the headteacher and the three deputies) embody a considerable store of managerial experience. They work well as a team and their roles and duties are appropriately deployed and rotated over time. At present the three deputies act as overall managers for each of the three key stages within the school. They discharge these roles conscientiously and effectively. The extent of their detailed involvement in daily issues and problems, however, sometimes distracts them from their strategic role as senior leaders.
106. The quality and effectiveness of leadership across subjects and pastoral work ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is sound overall. The system of faculties, in which certain subjects are grouped together, adds an unnecessary layer to the school's management and does not contribute to the overall effectiveness of leadership and management.
107. The school has a statement of shared values which it has recently reviewed through wide consultation with parents, staff and pupils. This is marked by a firm commitment to equality of opportunity and to the inclusion within the school community of pupils of all abilities. These values are generally very well reflected in the daily life of the school.
108. There is a clear commitment on the part of staff at all levels of the school to work for the improvement of standards. In some aspects, such as the improvement in the quality of teaching and in pupils' rate of attendance, this has been successful. Whole-school systems and procedures are not, however, always implemented consistently or robustly enough to sustain and promote similar improvement across all required areas.
109. Governors show strong support for, and commitment to, the school's goals and objectives. They are closely involved in the work of specialist sub-groups and, from time to time, in teachers' policy-making groups. The governing body shows due concern for the quality of the school's performance

and for the efficient use of resources. On the whole, however, governors interpret their role as that of offering support and feedback to the headteacher and other leaders in the school. They do not generally exercise a close monitoring role or provide their own sense of direction for the school. They have not, for example, ensured that action to implement the key issues arising from the last Inspection Report is fully in place.

110. The senior management team, in collaboration with subject coordinators, conducts regular sampling of the quality of teaching as part of its evaluation of the school's performance. The programme of induction of staff new to the school or to teaching is wide-ranging and well targeted. The system for the formal appraisal of teachers, however, is not consistently applied across the school and does not meet statutory requirements.
111. The manner in which the school identifies its priorities and targets is clear and effective. Targets are relevant and well specified, with appropriate reviews of progress built into procedures. The school is keen to undertake action research and evaluation to help it to assess its current practice and to measure its effectiveness. The collection of regular data on pupils' cognitive levels, an investigation into boys' underachievement at Key Stage 4, and a variety of attitude surveys conducted with parents, staff and pupils all provide useful banks of data. Such material is not, however, fully integrated into a whole-school system of managing information, through which the school's performance can be closely tracked, based on appropriate targets and regularly reviewed.
112. The school's educational priorities are supported through careful financial management and planning. The governing body is well informed about the school's spending patterns and monitors expenditure satisfactorily through its finance committee. There is sound long-term planning in the school's four-year plan. There is, however, no planning for the long-term replacement of capital equipment, an issue which was raised at the time of the last inspection. The reasonable surplus carried forward in the budget is largely intended for use as a contingency fund. The last audit did not identify any major weaknesses, and the school has responded effectively to all the points which were raised then.
113. Faculties receive their capitation through a system of bids linked to their development plans. Spending by heads of departments is carefully monitored. The sixth form is still subsidised by the rest of the school, as it was at the time of the last inspection, and the investigation of alternative ways of efficiently maintaining post-16 education has not been sufficiently extensive. The grants for pupils with special educational needs and for the development of IT are used effectively. The school makes effective use of new technologies such as e-mail, CDROMS and the Internet. The school has not looked in sufficient depth at ways in which it might manage spending on services such as basic utilities (except water) more efficiently.
114. The proportion of the school's budget spent on teaching staff is below average, but staffing provision is good. The majority of lessons are taught by subject specialists. The high overall standard of teaching in the school indicates that the school has the qualities to be an effective provider of initial teacher training. There are sufficient qualified or experienced support staff for pupils with special educational needs. With the exception of art and IT, technical support for subjects is satisfactory. There are sufficient administrative staff, except for the maintenance of data on pupils' attainment and progress. The school appropriately uses some of its funding for special educational needs to keep group sizes small. As a result the pupil-teacher ratio is lower than at the time of the last inspection. The time teachers spend in lessons is broadly average.
115. The total teaching time of 24 hours per week is one hour below that recommended nationally for Key Stage 4. Time is used well in the main and lessons start promptly, but time is wasted in the

system of allowing pupils in Years 7 and 8 to leave the pre-lunch lesson early to avoid queuing for lunch.

- 116. The site is pleasant and attractive, but the buildings are in an unsatisfactory state of maintenance and decoration. There is much litter around the site and some graffiti, a deterioration from the position reported at the last inspection. The accommodation is sufficient for teaching the curriculum, with the exception of that for Learning Support. Good progress has been made in remedying the deficiencies and hazards in the accommodation raised at the last inspection.
- 117. The high spending on resources is reflected in the good provision of books and equipment across the school. The library has been improved since the last inspection and provides a satisfactory resource base. Centrally provided IT is satisfactory, and the number of computers in the school is average. The provision of IT within subjects varies widely, but overall departments do not have sufficient machines. Access to the central IT facilities is not always available at times convenient to departments.

## **COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

- 118. The school has emphasised by its recent change of name and in its planning the need to maintain and develop close links with its surrounding neighbourhood. The school's 1999-2000 development plan targets support for two major community projects and for developments for 14-19 year olds in the youth centre on the school's site.
- 119. Regular meetings are held to coordinate youth, adult and sports activities on the school's site. The headteacher chairs the Area Community Education Council. His secondment during part of the 1998-1999 academic year to investigate models for raising achievement has provided many ideas and a sense of direction to proposals for the South Leamington Improvement Partnership (SLIP). This project has an emphasis on raising skills and aspirations in the whole community over a three-year period, in partnership with other providers.
- 120. Similar energy has gone into supporting the building of community provision on the nearby Sydenham estate. This project aims to support pupils through the development of skills, homework clubs and family learning, and through the targeting of young mothers, those leaving care and young offenders. It is hoped to develop a system of educational credits to aid progression to further education.
- 121. Current cooperation between the school and further education is largely confined to joint provision for disaffected pupils at Key Stage 4. The school has worked hard to build close relationships with local primary schools. The youth centre on site makes provision at lunchtime and on some evenings for young people of 14 years of age and over, including separate sessions only for girls (but not boys). In its adult provision which makes use of school premises, the school responds to some community needs through, for example, community language classes and a choir.
- 122. A variety of business links support the vocational curriculum, business events and work experience in Years 11 and 12. An extended scheme of work experience in Key Stage 4 forms part of a programme for those pupils with poor attendance or behavioural records. There is little evidence of direct community links with the rest of the curriculum, but the multi-faith day for Years 7-9 is an example of what can be achieved.
- 123. The more major of these community initiatives are still at the planning stage. Some of these lack clear objectives against which progress and success can be measured. The overall strategy is

closely linked to the needs of the school and has the potential to raise pupils' performance in future years.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

124. In order to enhance the sound quality of education that pupils already receive, the governors and senior management of the school should:

(a) improve pupils' attainments and progress further by

- matching closely the standard of work set to pupils' levels of ability or attainment, and ensuring in particular that the needs of pupils of high attainment are met in those classes with a high preponderance of pupils of low attainment (## 42 57 73 140 150 182 191 193 207 216);
- clarifying why boys' overall performance deteriorates in Years 10-11 and taking appropriate remedial action (## 14 48);
- assessing pupils' attainments throughout Years 7-9 to consistent criteria across all subjects, in order to measure accurately the progress of individual pupils and the performance of the whole school (## 7 94-95 97 165 181 201);
- establishing a database of significant information about pupils' performance, in order to judge accurately the school's progress and effectiveness (## 92 96 103 111 165); and
- increasing teaching time to at least the minimum of 25 hours nationally recommended for Key Stage 4 (## 36 45 72 115).

(b) improve provision in the sixth form by

- examining thoroughly the variety of ways possible to make teaching and learning in the sixth form more cost-effective (## 70 113); and
- improve the accuracy of recording and monitoring the attendance of sixth formers [a weakness identified also at the last inspection] (# 34).

(c) pay sufficient attention to keeping the school free from dirt and litter (## 28 87 116).

(d) improve the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development (## 78-79), partly by meeting the statutory requirement to

- teach religious education to all pupils in Years 10-11 and in the sixth form (## 71 78 247); and
- provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils (# 85).

(e) ensure that other statutory requirements are met by

- teaching information technology sufficiently in Years 10-11 (## 71 203 209); and
- undertaking the formal appraisal of teachers in those departments where it has lapsed (# 110).

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 21-23 29 40 43 52 58-59 61 69 74 77 87 97 104 106 108-109 112 114 and in some subject paragraphs.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	201
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	110

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	18	49	27	3	0	0

*The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. The percentages do not total 100 per cent because of "rounding".*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	774
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	140

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Special educational needs	Y7–Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	63
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	320

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	128

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	36
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

### *Attendance*

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8%
National comparative data	7.9%

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6%
National comparative data	1.1%

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence in the 1998-1999 academic year.*

***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	67	62	129

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	32	25
	Girls	33	21	21
	Total	60	53	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	47 (37)	41 (46)	36 (39)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (10)	15 (23)	8 ( 9)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30	36	33
	Girls	38	31	33
	Total	68	67	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	53 (70)	52 (61)	51 (50)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (29)	24 (27)	19 (23)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

*Percentages in brackets refer to 1998.*



### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	65	52	117

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	20	48	57
	Girls	24	45	50
	Total	44	93	107
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38 (34)	80 (86)	91 (92)
	National	46 (45)	91 (90)	96 (95)

*Percentages in brackets refer to 1998.*

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	29.9 (31.5)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

*Figures in brackets refer to 1998.*

### ***Attainment at the end of the sixth form***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of pupils 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	1999	9	25	34

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	16.7	11.6	13.2 (11.9)	1.5	0.7	0.8
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

*Figures in brackets refer to 1998.*

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	Intermediate level - 8	63%
	National		73%

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	123
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	612
Any other minority ethnic group	4

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

	<b>Fixed period</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	1
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	67	3
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: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.8
Average class size	18.9

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	534

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

***Financial information***

Financial year	1998-1999
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	1,902,324
Total expenditure	1,837,886
Expenditure per pupil	2,460
Balance brought forward from previous year	75,356
Balance carried forward to next year	139,794

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

774

Number of questionnaires returned

118

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	<b>Strong-ly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disag-ree</b>	<b>Strong-ly disa-gree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	42	49	3	2	4
My child is making good progress in school.	39	55	2	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	14	61	7	3	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	65	8	2	9
The teaching is good.	30	63	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	51	7	0	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	43	3	0	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	46	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	24	59	5	0	12
The school is improving.	32	55	4	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	59	5	2	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	51	8	2	17

### **Other issues raised by parents**

There were additional comments from parents on 18 of the 118 questionnaires returned.

Amongst the many positive points mentioned were:

- the high quality of work and teaching for pupils with special educational needs;
- the warmth and effectiveness of links between home and school;
- the commitment, approachability and accessibility of the headteacher and his staff.

Amongst the very few concerns expressed in the questionnaires were:

- occasional bullying; and
- poor behaviour in a small minority of lessons.

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

### **ENGLISH**

125. Pupils' overall standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below that generally found nationally. In National Curriculum tests in 1999, pupils' average points score was well below the national average. The performance of boys was nearer to their own national average than that of girls was to theirs. Results were a little below the average of pupils in schools with a similar proportion of free school meals, but showed an improvement on the previous year and indicate an upward trend.
126. The general standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national expectation. In GCSE for both English language and literature in 1999, pupils' average points scores were below the national averages and were not as high as those achieved in 1998. Boys' results in English language were lower than those of girls, but were closer to their own national average than those of girls were to theirs. In English literature boys' results were above their own national average, whereas girls' were below theirs. The overall standard of attainment in the sixth form is in line with course requirements. In GCE A-level in 1999 results of the small number entered were below the national average.
127. The majority of pupils throughout the school listen attentively and work productively in pairs or small groups. By the end of Key Stage 3, the overall quality of listening is somewhat above average. The standard of speaking is, in the main, typical of that found nationally, although there are marked variations in quality. Pupils generally respond enthusiastically to questioning and answer clearly and accurately. High-attaining pupils in Year 10 spoke confidently and articulately about the social and political background to *Macbeth*. A significant minority of low-attaining pupils fail to express ideas audibly and coherently. The standard of oral work has been maintained since the last inspection, and with some improvement in the sixth form; here the majority of pupils contribute considered and mature comments, and some make lively and imaginative responses.
128. There have recently been marked improvements in the standard of reading of many pupils in Year 7, when measured against the often low level of literacy on entry. The reason for these improvements is the allocation of lessons specifically for detailed work on literacy. Pupils with special educational needs receive skilled and encouraging support from specialist staff. By the end of Key Stage 4 the general standard of reading comprehension is in line with the national expectation. A significant number of low-attaining pupils, however, lack fluency when reading aloud and have difficulty with longer words and in sustaining sense through phrases. Throughout the school pupils read a wide range of literature and many respond with interest and increasing critical awareness. By the end of Key Stage 4, through close study of texts, pupils identify characterisation, themes and plot. High-attaining pupils analyse well elements of language and style in the work of various authors. In the sixth form, pupils progress to complex, critical analysis of challenging works as when, for example, a group conducted a detailed study of the use of metaphysical imagery in the poetry of John Donne.
129. The overall quality of written work in both Key Stages 3 and 4 is below that found nationally. At the end of Key Stage 3 the standard of presentation and handwriting is, in the main, below average. Work in lessons on literacy is increasingly being focused on spelling, punctuation and grammar to improve areas of identified weakness. Many pupils draft their work carefully, but a significant minority fail to recognise errors or check carefully enough. The higher than average proportion of

pupils with special educational needs and many low-attaining pupils find difficulty in planning and writing accurately at pace - skills which are essential to success in examinations.

130. By the end of Key Stage 4 some high-attaining pupils produce final drafts of above average quality. For example, a pupil writing about Browning's poem, *My Last Duchess*, showed perceptive insight into the poet's style and use of language and expressed her ideas in a form which was well planned, skilfully structured, carefully crafted and accurately written. In the sixth form, pupils produce written work which shows mature and imaginative understanding of literature.
131. The quality of teaching throughout the school is never less than satisfactory and is good (or even better) in two-thirds of lessons. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good, with especially high standards in the sixth-form courses. Teachers plan and prepare lessons very well. Relationships are, in the main, mutually respectful. Tasks are clearly explained and pupils know exactly what to do and what standards are expected. The majority of lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and employ a stimulating range of linguistic activities.
132. Teachers show particular skill and patience when teaching some groups in which almost all pupils have special educational needs. Support staff offer constructive and positive assistance. Tasks set in almost all classes are well matched to pupils' different levels of attainment. Teachers use rigorous and demanding questioning to draw detailed responses from pupils. Because most pupils respect the thorough preparation of lessons and the value placed by teachers upon their opinions and efforts, the great majority are well motivated and hard-working. Keen setting of targets and conscientious assessment of pupils' progress also create confidence. Only rarely are lessons less successful, through a lack of variety in activities or too much talk by teachers. Homework is set satisfactorily.
133. The quality of learning is sound overall and is marginally better at Key Stage 4 than elsewhere. Through skilful and committed teaching, classes of low-attaining pupils sustain concentration well and make sound progress. High-attaining pupils throughout the school make good progress and many work with evident enjoyment. In their work in drama pupils work together well in groups and make quick and effective decisions. In media studies, the combination of analysis of a range of different media and the practical aspects of the subject provides good motivation for pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress in their work in literature and the majority accurately identify key features of texts studied.
134. The quality of behaviour is good overall. A minority of boys in Year 7 easily lose concentration and become restless. In Year 11 a few pupils are disaffected and are occasionally rudely defiant. There is an uneven distribution of pupils with special educational needs in a few classes which are taught as tutor groups.
135. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Media studies and drama provide added breadth and balance. Information technology does not play a significant role in the everyday work of the department. Relationships are positive and purposeful and the ethos of the department matches closely that of the school. The management of the department is good and its leadership is energetic and skilful.
136. In most other subjects across the curriculum pupils listen attentively. The quality of speech varies but, in general, pupils speak with confidence and make clear sense. In some subjects (such as geography) pupils are encouraged to use talk as an important way of learning and they consequently reach a good standard. This good practice is not consistent throughout departments, however, and in some subjects pupils have little opportunity to develop their ideas in speech.

137. The reading comprehension of the great majority of pupils is adequate for them to understand their textbooks and other materials. The quality of reading aloud varies greatly, but is close to average overall and in some subjects pupils reach a good standard through regular practice and encouragement. Most subjects fail to make enough use of the library as a vital source for wide reading and research. The presentation of written work is, in the main, below average and too often untidy and careless, with the exception of that in art, sports studies and RE where it is good. Mistakes with spelling and punctuation are common in many subjects. There is little evidence of extended writing and goodnote-taking is uncommon.

## **MATHEMATICS**

138. The proportion of pupils who achieved either the basic standard expected of 14 year olds or the higher levels in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was well below average. Based upon the average points score achieved by pupils, the school's results were well below average, when compared with either all schools or those schools in similar social circumstances. The results in previous years have also been consistently well below national averages. Boys' overall attainment was a little higher than that of the girls.
139. The proportion of pupils who achieved grades A\*-C in the GCSE examination in 1999 was below the national average. Few pupils achieved the highest grades and a smaller than average proportion of pupils achieved a grade in the range A\*-G. Boys' overall attainment was higher than that of the girls, contrary to national trends. When compared with schools in similar social circumstances, the results were below average. The results have been on a rising trend over recent years, but dipped a little in the last academic year. Examination results at A-level in 1999 were below average: few candidates were entered and none achieved the highest (A-B) grades, but almost all achieved a pass grade. No trend is discernible in the results over recent years because of the small number of candidates.
140. By the end of Key Stage 3 the standard of work of a larger than average proportion of pupils is below that expected of 14 year olds. Pupils in the top set make satisfactory progress and reach at least the expected standard in many of the routine skills of arithmetic, algebra, geometry and data-handling. For example, they demonstrate a confident grasp of the solution of linear equations and the manipulation of algebraic expressions. They know how to bisect angles and lines using ruler and compass and apply well basic statistical methods to the analysis of data. Rarely, however, is work extended beyond the routine level to more challenging investigations and problems.
141. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language respond positively to the very good teaching they receive and from effective support from classroom assistants. They make good progress. Such a class of pupils in Year 9, for example, found the ratio of the circumference to the diameter of circles by practical measuring. They learned the value of careful and accurate measuring, were absorbed by the task and reached a reasonably accurate conclusion. The large majority of pupils make satisfactory progress overall in a range of mathematical skills. Their attainment is frequently limited, however, by a poor recall of number facts, forgotten skills and knowledge, and insufficient understanding of earlier work.
142. High-attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 make good progress in response to the good teaching they receive. For example, the top set in Year 7 raised thoughtful questions on whether 0 and 1 could be regarded as prime numbers. There followed excited discussion of ways of expressing their definition, so deepening pupils' understanding and enabling them to tackle subsequent exercises with greater confidence. Similarly, those pupils with the most marked special educational needs respond positively to excellent teaching and make good progress. For instance, those in Year 8 gained a thorough understanding of how to represent data in bar charts in response to very carefully planned teaching.

143. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is below average overall. Those in the top set achieve satisfactory standards in much of their work. A minority prepare for the higher tier of GCSE examinations and the majority for the intermediate tier. They all demonstrate, at appropriate levels, a sound understanding of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and data-handling. For example, those preparing for the higher tier are confident and accurate in calculating the standard deviation of data, whilst all pupils in this set demonstrate a good grasp of common geometrical transformations such as reflection and translation, and describe them well, using accurate terminology and notation. The other pupils in Year 11 make steady progress through a broadly based programme towards the intermediate or foundation tiers of GCSE examinations, with the majority of pupils entered for the latter tier or for a certificate in numeracy.
144. Pupils whose attainment is broadly average generally make sound progress and achieve an appropriate standard in the basic routines of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and data-handling. Many such pupils, however, lack the confidence, sense of urgency or the determination to make better progress and gain a firmer understanding of the subject. Consequently, their attainment in the GCSE examination is below what it should be. Lower-attaining pupils respond well to the good teaching they receive, which develops their confidence and accuracy in basic skills and routines.
145. Pupils' progress in Year 10 is sound overall. The classes work on common themes as much as possible and gain skills and knowledge to appropriate levels. The set of pupils with the greatest special educational needs respond very positively to excellent teaching and work with much effort and productivity to overcome their weaknesses in numeracy. This set of pupils, for instance, grouped data into class intervals, recorded it in tabular form and drew frequency diagrams neatly and accurately. They interpreted their findings with increasing confidence. Similarly, pupils in the top set learned effectively to distinguish between discrete and continuous variables and developed well the methods of finding the mean, median and mode of data in a range of situations. A middle set tackled the concept of correlation and offered sensible and accurate interpretations of scatter diagrams in a variety of contexts.
146. The progress made by the small number of A-level pupils is satisfactory and in some aspects of their studies they achieve high standards. For example, pupils in Year 12 demonstrate clearly a good grasp of advanced methods of calculating the numbers of permutations and combinations, and thus the probabilities, of events in a range of complex contexts. Pupils in Year 13 successfully, but hesitantly, tackle A-level questions in both pure mathematics and mechanics.
147. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good overall. Occasionally they are very good - especially by those with the greatest special educational needs, pupils in the top sets and those studying for A-level. Many pupils have pride in their work and present it neatly and logically, using mathematical symbols and terminology correctly. The work of the majority, however, is presented in a slovenly and untidy manner, containing sequences of unexplained calculations and mathematically incorrect statements which fail to convey the pupils' understanding, especially when the final answer is wrong. Most pupils are positive and cooperative, and work steadily at the tasks set. They are willing to answer questions and respond well to their teachers' encouragement to explain their contributions to discussions. Pupils often work hard and productively at practising routine skills and procedures.
148. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Teachers work hard to maintain orderly classrooms and their vigilance is effective in containing the frequent minor disruptions by a small number of pupils in many classes. Pupils generally respect their teachers and respond positively to admonition. Most form constructive relationships with their peers and their teachers, and enjoy humour. They frequently help one another to clarify misunderstandings.

149. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. The teaching of A-level pupils is good, with one lesson in five being very good. Overall, three lessons out of every five are good and in a little above one lesson in five the teaching is very good or excellent. The weaknesses in teaching identified in the last inspection report have been largely rectified.
150. Teachers are suitably qualified and between them have a good spread of experience. Their subject knowledge, planning and expectations of what pupils can do are generally well matched to the needs of pupils. These factors usually enable teachers to develop pupils' learning well, by providing them with clear explanations, holding fruitful discussions that contain carefully structured questions, and by planning lessons which build current work firmly on that done earlier. Teachers are adept at anticipating where pupils usually make mistakes. Occasionally, however, discussions of new work are unnecessarily rushed, leading to untidy work on the blackboard and, at times, containing mathematically incorrect statements. Sometimes opportunities are missed in a few classes to provide an extra challenge for the higher attainers. More could be done on occasions to extend pupils' understanding by teachers being less ready to tell pupils the answer and pushing pupils into thinking problems through for themselves.
151. The weakness of a narrow range of teaching methods, identified in the last inspection report, has improved. Pupils practise skills and techniques thoroughly and effectively. Practical work is used occasionally to help them to understand abstract ideas. Pupils generally apply well their knowledge and skills to solve problems in everyday situations, but too many get away with not writing their answers logically and clearly. Opportunities are too few for pupils to investigate mathematical patterns and make generalisations. Little use is made of IT to enhance pupils' learning. These weaknesses, taken collectively, and pupils' high dependence upon their teachers partly account for examination results being lower than pupils are capable of. Pupils with special educational needs, however, are taught basic numeracy systematically and thoughtfully.
152. In many lessons a carefully planned sequence of activities that develops pupils' confidence and mastery of appropriate skills, combined with the vigilance, patience and care which teachers put into the development of good relationships with their pupils, provides a satisfactory climate for learning. Pupils' behaviour is managed very competently by teachers using effective strategies such as a well-targeted question or humour which avoid outright confrontation. The pace of lessons is unhurried. Special needs assistants and, on occasions, an extra teacher provide good support to pupils' learning. Text books and a small amount of duplicated material are used effectively.
153. During lessons teachers make good, ongoing assessments of pupils' understanding, and many errors are clarified by discussion with individual pupils. Formal written assessments are made regularly and, at Key Stage 3, a recently introduced system of recording pupils' individual progress against National Curriculum attainment targets is increasing their motivation. For example, pupils in Year 7 with the greatest special educational needs were very keen to do well in a short assessment of their numeracy skills. Marking is regular, and brief, encouraging or challenging comments are frequently added. Homework is set regularly and used effectively to reinforce pupils' learning. The subject is soundly organised and enthusiastically led. Morale in the department is good and the teaching staff has the potential to make the necessary improvements.
154. The general standard of numeracy of a large proportion of pupils is not good enough to support effectively their learning in mathematics and in other subjects across the curriculum. Too few pupils have ready recall of, for instance, multiplication tables. The use of mental methods of calculation is unsatisfactory, with an over-reliance on calculators to perform trivial calculations. This is because mental arithmetic is not taught frequently and systematically. In contrast, most pupils use a calculator well when it is appropriate to do so, especially in mathematics, science, design and technology, and



business education. Many pupils are weak at estimating and making approximations; for instance, they fail to use a sensible degree of accuracy in science. Pupils use appropriate units of measurement and their correct abbreviations well, but too many become confused when a mix of units is used. Pupils generally use algebra competently, but a significant minority are prone to errors. The appropriate representation and interpretation of data in graphical form are generally done competently.

## SCIENCE

155. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. Their overall performance in the 1999 National Curriculum test in Year 9 at the significant levels of 5+ and 6+ was well below the national expectations. Over the period 1997-1999 pupils' attainment has fallen gradually from being just below the national average to being well below, whilst the attainment of pupils at the higher level 6 has been consistently well below the national average. When this achievement is compared with that of pupils from similar schools (as measured by the criterion of free school meals), it is just below the average. When, however, the large proportion of pupils with special needs is taken into account, pupils' overall achievement is close to average.
156. During the 1997-1999 period boys have consistently performed better than girls at Key Stage 3, although the difference is small. The performance of ethnic minority pupils is not significantly different from that of the majority of pupils. Whilst most pupils have a sound knowledge of basic ideas about aspects such as electricity and the characteristics of life, their understanding of chemical processes is less secure: for example, some pupils are unaware of concepts such as chemical elements and compounds. As pupils move from Year 7 to Year 9, standards improve and can improve further.
157. At the end of Key Stage 4 overall attainment is average. In the 1999 GCSE double science examination 44 per cent of Year 11 gained a grade in the range A\*-C; this proportion was higher than that in 1998 and marginally better than the national average - a good achievement. The girls in particular did well and achieved the best results of the last three years, during which time they have consistently done better than boys. Ten per cent of boys did not reach the lowest grade (G) in the latest examination. The results in science for all pupils compare favourably with those in other subjects in this school and are significantly better than the average for schools with a similar intake.
158. Most pupils recall important terms in all three branches of the subject. They begin to understand, for example, the importance of bonding in chemical reactions, genetics, and factors affecting the flow of electricity. In some cases, however, pupils do not have an overview of the concepts; this is particularly the case in chemistry. In both key stages pupils use mathematics appropriately to calculate the results of experiments, such as the speed and acceleration of objects.
159. In the sixth form, performance in the A-level examinations has been variable. Whilst the number of entries in physics and chemistry has been too small to make reliable judgements, the results in biology have generally been above average; in 1997 and 1999 they were well above average and all pupils passed the examination. This is a credit to the school. In all three subjects pupils understand complex ideas such as evolution, bonding and reactance in AC circuits.
160. Pupils, in general, show interest in their lessons. Pupils in the sixth form are deeply involved in their studies. In Key Stage 3, pupils are enthusiastic, but at the same time some are easily distracted, so that they interrupt other pupils' concentration and the flow of lessons. At this stage relationships are generally good: pupils cooperate well in practical lessons, although some pupils with behavioural difficulties show aggressive behaviour, which is carefully handled by the teachers.

161. In Key Stage 4, pupils behave well and relationships are generally good. Some boys find the concentration on more challenging topics difficult to sustain and as a result they become disengaged and tax the patience of their teachers. The majority of pupils concentrate on their work and answer questions when asked. They relate well to one another and discuss the outcome of experiments sensibly. In the sixth form, pupils discuss issues thoughtfully and make a valuable contribution to their lessons.
162. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3, but good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teachers know their subject well and in Key Stage 4 use this knowledge to present challenging lessons. Sixth-form lessons are intellectually stimulating, enabling students to consolidate their understanding well. On the other hand, some lessons in Key Stage 3 fail to meet the needs of the more able pupils. Teachers use a wide range of approaches to promote interest in the subject and in this are well supported by an efficient and reliable technical staff and by suitable equipment (including computers).
163. Teachers generally manage pupils well, despite some difficult behaviour, but in a small minority of lessons in Key Stage 3 the failure to insist on acceptable standards of behaviour results in indiscipline and poor progress. Lessons are generally well prepared and, in most cases have clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils to give them a sense of purpose and confidence. Teachers question pupils about what they have learned: in the many good lessons this is extended to find out what they really know, but in a few lessons the questioning is superficial. Homework is set and marked appropriately, in accordance with departmental policy, to give pupils targets for improvement.
164. The department is well led and managed, with clearly stated policies aimed at enabling each pupil to achieve success. Teachers and technicians cooperate well and both benefit from a comprehensive appraisal system which promotes sound working practices. Schemes of work are well presented and meet statutory requirements. In Years 7-9 the department relies heavily on its chosen textbook and insufficiently emphasises its own objectives for the topics and individual lessons, particularly with reference to extension work. In Year 7 the scheme is effectively augmented by published material to promote the investigational aspects of science.
165. The assessment of pupils' performance is thorough and has, of late, become closely linked to the national tests at the end of Year 9. Information from these tests is not, however, centralised, so preventing the reliable tracking of individual pupils' progress. In Key Stage 4 both the schemes of work and assessment procedures follow the regulations of the examination boards, but prior information is insufficiently used to monitor pupils' progress.
166. Laboratories, although well worn, are safe, serviceable and reliable. The chemical store, identified as a potential hazard in the last inspection, is neat and tidy. Resources are good and well deployed and computers are readily available in each laboratory. Pupils gain much from the suitable range of equipment and from sufficient textbooks for them to be used for study at home.

## **ART**

167. Over the period 1997-1999, GCSE results were well above the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A\*-C or A\*-G. There is little difference between boys' and girls' results: both sexes perform significantly above the national averages for boys and girls. In 1999 pupils' overall performance in this subject was significantly above what they achieved in their other school subjects. At the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils achieve above the standard expected nationally. In the sixth form A-level results were significantly above the national average

over the period 1997-1999 for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A-B or A-E. In 1999 boys and girls performed equally well and significantly above the national averages for their respective sexes. Achievement is at the same high level as it was at the time of the last inspection.

168. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is above average overall. Their drawing skills are good. Their knowledge and understanding of artists' styles, as these apply to their own work in progress, are above average. In Year 9 the majority of pupils are very confident when drawing such objects as rusty cans, creating tonal collage images using newspapers, or designing and making kites inspired by fish. Many pupils express themselves clearly when engaged in oral discussion about their current or past work. The majority of pupils use sketchbooks well for research and reflection on the topics being studied. Written work is generally well presented, often in the pupils' own words. The low use of IT is a weakness in this key stage.
169. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment in applying artistic techniques and in thinking creatively is usually well above average. Higher attainers in Year 11 achieve well above average standards in drawing, as well as the ability to learn both from studying the work of other artists and the products of the man-made or natural world. They create large, eye-catching constructions – as, for example, the starfish and shell superbly modelled from pulped paper, seeds and pasta.
170. At the end of the sixth form, pupils' attainment is very high. Students talk convincingly about artists and their styles. Pupils in Year 13 have a thorough understanding of design processes and a deep sensitivity to the subject under investigation - as, for example, the use of repeated shell forms to create a paper sculpture which spirals from floor to ceiling.
171. Throughout the school pupils learn to understand both themselves and the natural and man-made world better through the topics they study and the processes they encounter. The majority of pupils make good (often very good) progress in learning through Key Stage 3. The progress of those who choose to continue to study the subject in Key Stage 4 or into the sixth form is excellent. Pupils benefit from the links which teachers help them to make with science in Year 7 (through, for example, the study of snails) and with design and technology in Year 8 through the investigation of objects such as chains and hinges. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is excellent. This is well illustrated by reactions, such as those of pupils in Year 8 as they learn about the human eye and of those in Year 10 as they use wire, card and plaster bandages to interpret the human form.
172. The very good quality of learning in the sixth form is exemplified by the high level of investigation carried out – as, for example, by a pupil in Year 12 into the effects of light through a cut-glass bowl. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is good when extra support is provided in the classroom, but in those lessons where it is not present, particularly in practical activities, the quality of learning declines. Higher-attaining pupils are well extended by the tasks offered and the resources available to them; these ensure that very good levels of research, reflection and problem-solving take place in all year groups. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress. Boys and girls benefit equally from the teaching methods and tasks they encounter.
173. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good (and often very good) in both key stages and are excellent in the sixth form. Small class sizes and extra adult support in most lessons benefit pupils with acknowledged behavioural problems by helping them to make a fresh start or to direct their energies in positive ways. Pupils enjoy the activities provided for them and their relationships with teachers are generally good.

174. The very high quality of teaching is the major factor in pupils' high standards of achievement. Teaching is always at least good and in three-quarters of the lessons ranged from very good to excellent. The best teaching is where teachers understand their pupils closely match the tasks set to individual pupils' needs and raise pupils' awareness of what is possible through personal effort. Teachers are well qualified and are committed to maintaining high standards. They form a very strong team, together with classroom assistants, and work with a common purpose. Some teachers lack confidence, however, in teaching the art element within IT. The lack of an art technician adds unnecessary pressure to hard-working teachers, who currently provide resources as well as teach lessons of an often exemplary quality.
175. The leadership and management of this subject are excellent: teaching objectives are very clear and very thoroughly carried out. Statutory requirements are met, with the exception of the use of IT because of a lack of appropriate software. The present accommodation is poor and storage is very limited, although plans are in place for improvement. Displays both within and outside the art areas are excellent, though currently failing to enhance the improvement of pupils' literacy. The quality of current pupils' work may be seen in the Christmas design used on the 1999 House of Commons Christmas card.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

176. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 and 1999 suggested that pupils' overall attainment was low and well below what would be expected for their age. The GCSE results in 1999 for grades A\*-C in the different aspects of the subject were also below the national average and similar to the results for 1998. The overall success rate is low, when compared to those in most other subjects in the school.
177. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in Year 9 is below the standard expected nationally, mainly because the level of pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 is well below average. Inspection evidence, however, indicates that, although pupils' present overall attainment is below average, it is not as low as the teachers' assessments would suggest. In the 1998 and 1999 national assessments girls' results were well ahead of boys'. The overall standard at the end of Key Stage 3 has shown little improvement in the three years from 1997 to 1999.
178. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a broad experience of designing, using wood, plastic, graphic media, textiles and food. They know how to work safely. Higher-attaining pupils explain their ideas for their designs accurately and fluently, as when describing rotational and reciprocating movement for a mechanical toy. Pupils know about food safety and quality control. They have little experience in electronics, control or computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM); the limited resources available in the department restrict higher-level work in all years.
179. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below average overall, although in a minority of cases it is higher. The GCSE results in 1999 in design and technology were below the national average, and were not as good as those achieved in 1998. The 1998 and 1999 results were just above average in resistant materials, near average in textiles, but well below average in food technology. Boys' results have been well below average in recent years and lag well behind those of girls'. Most pupils have competent practical and graphical skills, but their competence in research and investigations varies widely. Pupils' skill in evaluating the quality of work is relatively weak. In the sixth form the design work undertaken by the single candidate is in line with the expected standard to meet course requirements. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactory standards.

180. On entry in Year 7, pupils' previous experience in the subject is often shallow and limited. At Key Stage 3 the department's concentration on developing skills in the subject ensures that pupils of all abilities make confident progress in understanding how to use tools and construction processes safely and with reasonable accuracy. Throughout the school pupils have good opportunities for learning through discussion, and frequent opportunities to measure, calculate and develop their numerical capability soundly. Written work is generally satisfactory, although spelling is often weak. At Key Stage 4 higher-attaining pupils work with greater independence: they present their work by using a suitable range of techniques and improve the presentation of their work by using IT. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good; the careful match of learning to the targets in pupils' IEPs enables them to achieve appropriate success.
181. Teaching is usually good in Years 7-11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Although teachers are enthusiastic specialists, they tend to plan independently of one another; the faculty structure is not used sufficiently to create a whole-subject approach (as also noted in the last inspection). Teachers do not always relate modules of work sufficiently to the required subject content of the National Curriculum's programmes of study and assessment criteria; this weakness is partly responsible for low standards. Some aspects of the subject, such as control, are omitted, because staff lack training or sufficient resources; these deficiencies are planned to be resolved shortly.
182. The department does not have an overall scheme of work that offers sufficient guidance to teachers to plan for suitable progression in the subject, particularly in the skills associated with research, investigation, drawing, design, making and evaluation. Although teachers are effective in developing pupils' knowledge and skills in language and number, and give very good support to lower-attaining pupils, the more able pupils are insufficiently challenged overall. Since the last inspection necessary improvements have been made to hygiene in food areas and to dust extraction in the workshops. Much of the furniture is heavily worn.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

183. Pupils' overall level of attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is below the national expectation. In the sixth form attainment is in line with course requirements. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3, results indicated that very few pupils achieved the higher grades and that girls consistently achieved higher levels than boys. In 1999, GCSE results were well below the national average and no pupils gained the highest (A\* or A) grades. In the past three years there has been an improvement in the grades gained by boys, but a marked decline in those achieved by girls. Pupils' overall performance at GCSE was well below what they achieved in many other subjects in the school.
184. Very few pupils take the GCE A-level examination in the subject. In the past three years all have gained at least a pass grade. The department has carried out a thorough review of the results and is implementing very clear ways of raising pupils' attainment in the future.
185. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of how people use and manage their environment. The higher-attaining pupils have a good knowledge of the subject and generally use their understanding well to analyse and explain patterns in new areas of study. Pupils in general have a poor knowledge of where places are and what they are like, and have difficulty finding them in an atlas. They have difficulty in relating patterns they have learned to real examples. One group of pupils in Year 11, for example, gained a fair knowledge of the hierarchy of shopping areas in a town, but had great difficulty in applying their understanding to the town in which they live.

186. Pupils in the sixth form have a sound knowledge of the subject and use geographical models to explain geographical patterns. They draw effectively on their background knowledge and personal experiences to support their explanations. In Year 13, for example, pupils discussed the issues of tourism in a less developed country and made well-focused references to a recent visit to The Gambia.
187. Pupils have satisfactory skills in collecting and selecting information from resource material. Written answers are usually in full sentences and correct, but they are often brief, showing a basic understanding but lacking real depth. Presentation, spelling and punctuation are generally weak. Pupils' numerical skills are satisfactory: they can accurately draw graphs and analyse the basic statistics they are required to use. Pupils generally listen well. Higher-attaining pupils have good oral skills. In one lesson pupils in Year 9, for instance, had researched issues of tourism and in pairs presented their findings to the rest of the class clearly, fluently, with expression and good structure, and with good use of geographical terms.
188. Pupils learn well in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and satisfactorily in Key Stage 4. Pupils make good gains in acquiring knowledge and understanding when there is a brisk review of previous work, lively explanation, a well-structured lesson and encouragement to pupils to use the knowledge they have gained. In one lesson, for instance, low-attaining pupils in Year 8 made good progress in understanding the reasons for the location of industry. Following a lively and interested review of previous work, in which all pupils willingly put their point of view, they diligently completed a well-constructed exercise that was carefully matched to their needs, asked questions, maintained concentration, and effectively reinforced their understanding. At Key Stage 4 learning is less effective where the work provided does not allow pupils to use a full range of learning skills, where exercises are too long, and where pupils with a short attention span lose focus and pace of working.
189. Pupils generally have a positive attitude to the subject. The majority are interested, keen, work hard and listen carefully. They are secure and confident, are generally willing to be involved in the lesson, and ask for support when it is required. A minority of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, fail to maintain interest and concentration, do not adhere consistently to classroom rules, and drift "off task", particularly when they are required to persevere with an extended piece of work. Sixth-form pupils are conscientious and well motivated, and work effectively as a group.
190. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teachers are always well prepared and organised. They have a good knowledge of the subject and provide clear, well-illustrated and often lively explanations. Lessons are carefully planned and sequenced with a clear focus. Teachers manage pupils well, often inspiring real interest in the subject, and provide positive and informative support. At Key Stage 3 most lessons proceed at a good pace, with a variety of activities and good quality resources which are used well. In one lesson in Year 7, for example, pupils compared life in rural and urban areas of Brazil. The lesson started briskly with skilful questioning to review previous work and gain interest, the teacher building diagrams on the board to show life in rural areas and pupils' expectations of life in a city. They watched a short, well-chosen video sequence of city life, read some text, modified their views, and completed an exercise which consolidated and used the knowledge they had gained.
191. At Key Stage 4, lessons are less effective, because they often lack variety of activities and methods, and fail to contain exercises which allow pupils to apply the understanding they have gained. Teachers' expectations overall are modest and often the higher-attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently to realise their full potential, so leading to underachievement. Work is generally well matched to the needs of the lower-attaining pupils. Marking is up to date, with good diagnostic

comments and suggested ways for improvement. Homework is set regularly and is generally purposeful.

192. The scheme of work is well written and provides a good basis for teaching. There is no fieldwork at Key Stage 3 to develop further pupils' understanding of geographical enquiry and to provide support for GCSE coursework. There is no effective use of IT because of difficulties of access to computers. The curriculum contains no formal contribution to cultivate pupils' personal development. The system of assessment is good, attainment is recorded effectively, and increasingly good use is made of it to monitor pupils' performance.
193. Leadership of the department is generally good. There is a clear sense of direction for the subject, with a good focus on planning for the future and effective monitoring. The present arrangements for teaching pupils are unsatisfactory, because there are large numbers of pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties in some classes and underachievement by the higher-attaining pupils. The subject is taught by three well-qualified and experienced members of staff who are well deployed. The quality and quantity of resources are satisfactory, but there is a shortage of atlases and a very narrow range of supplementary resources, such as photographs and fieldwork equipment. The department responded satisfactorily to the last inspection, and with a new sense of direction is in a good position to make further improvements.

## **HISTORY**

194. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' overall attainment is below that expected nationally. Teachers assessed their pupils as being below the national average in 1998. Although there was an improvement in 1999, attainment was still below average. The overall attainment of girls is higher than that of boys. The higher-attaining pupils reach standards which are in line with those seen nationally. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection, at both the beginning and the end of the key stage, was below that seen nationally. Pupils in Key Stage 3 see and explain historical causes and effects and use a limited range of sources competently for information about the past. Most lower-attaining pupils have difficulty using sources for more than simple information. Higher attainers use sources effectively to describe the past and produce extended writing of good quality.
195. Pupils taking the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 reach an overall standard which is below the national average. The GCSE results at the time of the last inspection were above the national average. The percentage achieving grades A\*-C in 1999 was well below the national average. The percentage of pupils who achieved grades A\*-C has, however, risen very slightly between 1997 and 1999. The attainment of boys has fluctuated over the past three years, but has always been below the national average for boys. The attainment of girls has increased between 1997 and 1999, but remains below the national average for girls. The percentage of those who gained A or A\* grades has been well below the national average for the last three years.
196. The standard of work seen in Key Stage 4 during the inspection was below the national average, and only a small minority showed the potential to reach the very top grades. Pupils taking GCSE see and explain the causes of past events, and the motives for actions taken, to a broadly satisfactory level. They use sources reasonably effectively to extract information and make deductions about the past. Higher-attaining pupils see that different views of the past may exist, as, for example, in a lesson about the settlement of the Great Plains of the USA in the 1850s, but most have difficulty explaining why the different views may exist. In completing examination questions, many pupils do not answer in sufficient depth or detail to gain very high marks. Examination results at A-level have been well below the national average over the past three years. Only a very small amount of

work at A-level could be seen during the inspection; work seen in lessons during the inspection was in line with that expected nationally.

197. The quality of teaching is good overall, and never less than satisfactory, a standard similar to that seen at the last inspection. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and good elsewhere. Teachers know their subject well at all levels and expect all pupils to work hard and behave well. As a result, most pupils, at all levels of ability, respond well and try hard to achieve their best. Teachers manage their pupils effectively, deal patiently with pupils who have learning and behavioural difficulties, and use praise and encouragement to motivate the pupils. Relationships are good: the atmosphere in lessons is pleasant and there is effective discipline. This creates a good working environment, in which all those pupils who wish to learn may do so. The support staff who are available in some lessons are used to good effect to help and motivate pupils and to keep them focused on their work.
198. The work set for pupils at Key Stage 3 is suitably matched to their abilities through appropriate textbooks for lower- and higher-attainers and through the use of simplified worksheets in some lessons. As a result, most pupils make progress in gaining some knowledge and understanding about the past, and learn to use different kinds of sources as evidence. In a lesson about town conditions in the 19th century, for instance, pupils of a wide range of ability contrasted housing then and now through the appropriate use of a mixture of pictorial and textual sources. A higher-attaining group working on the same topic were asked to work through more complex and less structured questions, and to use statistics to explain their answers.
199. Pupils taking the GCSE course are given good opportunities to practise examination questions as, for example, in a lesson on a source-work question on the American West, although a minority do not show much inclination to work hard in order to achieve good results. Marking is regular, although comments on work at Key Stages 3 and 4 do not always show pupils clearly enough how they can improve. The marking of work in the sixth form is usually detailed, thorough and helpful.
200. Only a limited range of teaching methods is used, so limiting the depth of pupils' understanding on occasions. During the inspection most lessons followed a similar pattern of questions and answers, a review of previous work, and a whole-class study of some text or pictures, followed by individual work by pupils. No work in pairs or groups, for example, was seen.
201. Statutory requirements are met at Key Stage 3. The temporary absence of the head of department has led to some weaknesses in the leadership and management of the department. Documentation and schemes of work are incomplete, and there is no developmental planning for the department, except that which exists for the humanities faculty as a whole. Assessment is satisfactory, but the information obtained is insufficiently used. There is no up-to-date IT hardware within the department. Access to centrally provided IT, especially for use of the Internet, is not always easy at times convenient to the department. As a result, little progress has been made since the last inspection in the effective use of IT.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

202. By the end of both key stages the majority of pupils do not achieve what would be expected for their ages. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicated that pupils' attainment was well below the national average. Pupils' knowledge and skills in the subject were low, when compared to their attainment in many other subjects.
203. Some progress has been made in the subject since the last inspection. This includes the establishment of GCSE information technology, which is taken by about half the pupils in Years 10



and 11; the first examination results are due in 2000. Pupils have little opportunity to use IT or to demonstrate their competence in other subjects, however, because resources are very limited within departments. Higher-attaining pupils have the confidence to work independently (often at home) to maintain their skills, mainly in handling information. Overall provision in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory and standards throughout the school are below average. Sixth-form pupils completing GNVQ courses achieve the key IT skills expected at Foundation and Intermediate levels.

204. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is below the standard expected nationally, but it is not as low as the teachers' assessments suggest. Most pupils have basic competence in word processing, desktop publishing, databases and spreadsheets and use computers to draw, measure and log data. They have some experience of the Internet for research. In the 1998 and 1999 national assessments, girls' results were ahead of boys'. Results in 1997 were also below the national expectation, although results were not analysed for differences in boys' and girls' performance.
205. Pupils' learning is satisfactory in the timetabled lessons of the subject at both key stages. Pupils make good progress in lessons, because they are willing to persevere to master new skills and to seek help when needed. Pupils are encouraged to learn and understand through a range of well-structured tasks, involving the handling of information and data. These also contribute well to their skills in linguistic and numerical work – as, for example, when using the computer to add, subtract and calculate data in a spreadsheet. The poor concentration of some pupils with special educational needs limits the amount of work done without close support.
206. At all key stages pupils are willing to learn. They generally behave well in lessons. They listen carefully and concentrate hard to acquire new skills. Pupils are given good advice on how to improve their work and enhance their learning through detailed guidance materials. High-attaining pupils complete tasks with interest and confidence, as they explore, refine and develop their ideas independently – as, for example, when designing an eye-catching logo for a restaurant. Less confident pupils, frustrated by their mistakes, sometimes lose motivation and achieve little. The common practice of holding a discussion at the end of lessons enables pupils to consolidate their learning. Pupils are generally cooperative, help one another and use equipment responsibly.
207. Teaching is good in the specifically timetabled lessons throughout the school. Lessons are well planned. Teachers' expectations of standards of work and pupils' behaviour are good. Teaching points are clearly explained. Discussions about work motivate pupils to work well for long periods of time. Some pupils, however - particularly those of higher attainment - are insufficiently challenged and could achieve more. The lack of support for pupils with special educational needs in a minority of lessons leads to restlessness and lack of progress. Computerised systems of learning support for literacy and numeracy are not exploited.
208. The majority of teachers in other subjects are confident to use computers for their own use, but do not have the training or ready access to resources to develop the use of IT in their own subjects. The teaching of IT is good in science, satisfactory in music, but unsatisfactory in most other subjects because of sparse resources in departments and the heavy use of the school's central provision for timetabled courses.
209. The school has made steady progress to improve its provision of resources since the last inspection and is meeting its targets for 1999-2000. The faculty system for managing IT and design and technology is not, however, effective in facing National Curriculum requirements. Although the school has introduced GCSE information technology, statutory requirements are not being met at Key Stage 4, because not all pupils either have timetabled lessons or sufficient opportunities to use

IT in other subjects. Nevertheless, the school has replaced much equipment to a higher specification and the ratio of pupils to computers is now about average. There is insufficient central planning and assessment in IT. The school has been networked for access to the Internet, following a successful bid for external funding, but does not have a financial policy for the maintenance and replacement of equipment. Technical support is good, but insufficient for the growing demand for it in the school.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

210. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate an overall level of attainment in line with the national average in 1999, but below average in 1998. Pupils currently near the end of Key Stage 3 achieve an overall standard below the national average. They are better at listening and reading than speaking and writing. They have good understanding of the teachers' spoken language in many lessons, and make good sense when reading passages of French or German. Higher-attaining pupils are at the early stages of writing some passages independently, but for many pupils writing consists of copying and labelling. In some classes pupils make themselves understood well when speaking, but in other classes, where pupils are given insufficient opportunities to practise the language, the quality of speaking is low.
211. In 1999 the percentage of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations in French was in line with the national average, but below average in German. Performance in both languages matched that of most other subjects in the school. In 1998 it was below average in German and well below average in French. There has been a marked improvement in attainment, however, in GCSE in each of the last three years. The percentage gaining grades in the range A\*-G has been consistently in line with the national average, but the proportion gaining the highest grades (A\* and A) was well below average.
212. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are currently below average overall. Higher-attaining pupils show sound understanding of spoken and written language from a variety of sources, and lower-attainers cope reasonably well. Standards in these two skills are average overall. Higher attainers use a range of language in their writing, although they mostly use simple, rather than complex, sentences. Their speaking is also reasonably well developed. Lower-attaining pupils write very little independently and offer little in speaking. Overall, standards in writing and speaking are below the national average.
213. There have been no candidates at A-level in recent years, but this year some pupils in Year 13 are studying German. They read quite difficult texts with reasonable understanding and understand the teachers' spoken German well. In these two skills they attain average standards. Their skills in speaking and writing are below average. In writing they use some good constructions and a range of vocabulary, but their work often lacks the necessary accuracy. They do not respond very readily in spoken German.
214. Pupils' attitudes to their work are satisfactory overall, but they vary from very good to poor. In the best lessons they listen attentively and answer readily, but in other lessons, although they listen carefully to the teachers' questions, they are sometimes reluctant to risk an answer for fear of being wrong. In most lessons they complete the work they are asked to do at a reasonable pace, and work well in pairs and in whole-class lessons. Overall, behaviour is good, but in a small number of classes a small minority of pupils disrupt the work of others.
215. Teaching is predominantly good throughout the school. The main strengths of the teaching are in planning and in the imaginative use of resources. In nearly a fifth of the lessons teaching was very good. In a German lesson in Year 7, for example, the teacher's high expectations and effective use of a range of resources and activities enabled the pupils to make very good progress in developing their

ability to ask and answer questions about their family and friends. Teaching was unsatisfactory in another Year 7 class, however, when the tasks were not sufficiently well explained to enable some pupils with learning difficulties to make progress.

216. In many lessons the work set by the teachers does not sufficiently challenge the most able pupils, a deficiency also noted in the last inspection. In most lessons teachers use French or German as the main means of communication in the classroom, and expect the pupils to do so. Although there is still some unnecessary use of English in a few classes, this does represent an improvement on the previous inspection. Teachers make particularly effective use of homework to develop the work done in class or to prepare for subsequent lessons. In almost all lessons teachers manage the behaviour of the pupils well and ensure that they remain on task.
217. Most pupils are given the opportunity to study two foreign languages in Key Stage 3 but, as at the time of the last inspection, insufficient time is provided for this. Pupils can also study two foreign languages in Key Stage 4, but have to miss a PSE lesson and have lessons before the start of the school day in order to do so.
218. The management of the department is currently unsatisfactory. Until this year, there was a head of department with designated responsibility for the day-to-day management of foreign language teaching. Currently the Head of the Communications Faculty has assumed this role, in addition to other responsibilities. There is no common departmental approach to language teaching and to spreading more widely the good practice which already exists in some parts of the department. There is a real danger that the rising standards, which have been a feature of the department in the last two years, will not be maintained without the clear leadership of a knowledgeable head of department. The department meets the statutory requirement to teach the National Curriculum programmes of study.

## MUSIC

219. By the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment of pupils is a little below the national average. Pupils perform and compose to a fair standard. They use electronic keyboards, voices, guitars and percussion to reproduce melodies and bass line, and add chords and drum tracks. Through practical activities they learn how melody and harmony fit together and how pieces are structured. They study variations by listening to exemplars from great composers, in particular Mahler and Mozart. Variations and improvisation are also studied through work on the 12 bar Blues. They also learn how music can be expressive by composing background music for drama as, for example, in their production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Most pupils learn to play simple diatonic melodies from staff notation, although this usually has the letter names of notes added.
220. Pupils also acquire a broad background knowledge of modern popular and folk music at this stage, as well as music from India, China, Africa and the Caribbean islands. They learn about the major periods and styles of "classical" music from the medieval period to the twentieth century.
221. Attainment is in line with the national average by the end of Key Stage 4. In the 1997-1999 results at GCSE, taken together, eight out of 13 pupils gained grades in the range A-C none of these gained an A\* grade. This pattern of examination success accords well with the standards of work seen during the present inspection. Standards are similar to those at the last inspection.
222. At Key Stage 4 most pupils perform, with varying degrees of skill, on individual instruments and on keyboards. Most develop keyboard skills to help them with general musical understanding and as an aid to composition. By the end of the key stage they compose and arrange pieces in a range of styles, including freer "soundscapes" in which graphic notation is used. Pupils acquire a reasonable

working knowledge of Western music from the main historical periods. They also gain a basic understanding of musical devices and features and associated terminology – as, for example, cadences, ostinato and fugue. Theoretical studies are always based on the pupils' playing or simulations of pieces of the period. At both key stages those pupils who receive lessons on individual instruments attain satisfactory standards of performance, as exemplified by Associated Board examination results.

223. The quality of learning at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils acquire knowledge and understanding of music almost entirely through practical work. Many pupils favour an intuitive approach to music: they are keen to rehearse and perform pieces, but many are too easily satisfied with the end result. In most lessons pupils listen well to instructions and work purposefully at a good pace. In the best lessons this pace and productivity is usually the result of confident and well-structured teaching. Without firm structures many pupils quickly lose interest and resort to irrelevant activity. A minority of pupils at this stage develop the ability to work independently. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a wide range of learning experiences, but their overall attainment on entry is below average. Well-constructed schemes of work and good teaching enable the majority of pupils to make steady progress through the key stage.
224. In Key Stage 4 the quality of pupils' learning is very good. Although work at this stage is also essentially practical, pupils gain a sound background knowledge of music. They acquire a growing understanding of the way music has developed through history and how it is constructed. Good emphasis is placed on listening and on the simple analysis of musical examples. In one lesson on the blues, for instance, the teacher played and sang to the class, after which the pupils analysed fine differences in rhythms and harmony. Musical features such as unison, texture and form were identified and then incorporated into the pupils' own pieces.
225. At this key stage, pupils concentrate on their work well. Most work positively with minimal supervision and have a clear idea about what they need to learn in order to make progress. A small number have very good potential as performers: some of these pupils present good challenges for their teachers to ensure that basic techniques are learnt, whilst fostering individuality. The GCSE course is open to pupils of all levels of attainment, including pupils with special educational needs, some of whom have additional classroom support. These pupils learn well and make good long-term progress in music.
226. In most lessons at both key stages pupils' attitudes in lessons are good. The majority show a genuine interest in their work. They listen well and respond readily to their teachers' questions and instructions. Most behave well in lessons and show respect for one another and for equipment. In almost all lessons pupils set out and put away the electronic instruments carefully. Pupils work regularly in pairs and groups, and the majority of them work well in cooperation with others. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils have acquired a good level of self-discipline for successful study.
227. Teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory and is good overall – predominantly satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Teachers know their subject well and have good skills as performers, accompanists and conductors. These skills are especially evident in the GCSE work. Discipline is good in the majority of lessons and time is used very efficiently. Pupils are usually given a time limit in which to complete set tasks. This ensures a sense of urgency in their learning. In a minority of classes there are small groups of pupils who are very easily distracted and whose unsatisfactory behaviour slows the pace of learning. Where teaching is good, these pupils are given tasks at levels appropriate to their abilities and there is good anticipation of potential trouble. Much time is devoted to counselling pupils after lessons and in completing forms that monitor behaviour.

228. The department is well led. Schemes of work are realistic and well thought out. They include plans for topics which link with other subject areas. Long-term planning is good and lessons are always well prepared. Teachers know the pupils well, make suitable allowances and give reasonable challenges according to individual needs. Pupils with special educational needs are given extra attention, where appropriate. All work is assessed very regularly and pupils are always kept informed of what is expected of them in order to attain higher standards of work. At Key Stage 4, assessments are accurately carried out and make suitable reference to the GCSE examination requirements. A team of visiting teachers cover most instruments, except brass. The provision of this teaching has improved recently. Approximately 100 pupils now receive lessons. A further 40 play steel drums.
229. Resources for music are now adequate and of good quality. The department is also in the process of negotiating for the formal use of additional space for individual teaching. These developments represent a significant improvement since the last inspection. A good range of extracurricular activities involves up to 250 pupils. These include a steel band, beginners' orchestra, bands and choirs especially formed for the musicals, and a wide range of rock bands and ensembles, partly led by pupils. Pupils are very involved in the regular school productions. The most recent of these, *Oliver*, involved around 200 pupils who performed to a very high standard.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

230. Pupils' overall attainment at the end of both key stages is sound and is broadly in line with what is expected nationally. At the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils have a sound grasp of the basic skills of a range of games and can catch, pass or stop a ball to the expected standard. Higher-attaining pupils judge the flight of the ball or shuttle well and move well on court, when playing adapted games of badminton or volleyball. In dance lessons pupils plan their sequences of movement well and can identify what they or others need to do to improve the quality of their work. The limited space in the school's hall restricts opportunities for pupils to engage in travelling movements; this and the thick-soled training shoes pupils wear for dance hinder their progress.
231. During Key Stage 4 pupils extend their skills and tactical awareness in a range of activities and the majority attain standards that are seen in most schools. Nearly all pupils participate competently in the full adult version of at least one major competitive game. Pupils' understanding and application of fitness principles have improved since the last inspection and are now close to the expected standard.
232. Results in the GCSE examination have improved significantly over the last three years. In 1997 only 13 per cent of pupils achieved the higher (A\*-C) grades. In 1999, from a small entry of 17 pupils, two-fifths were successful at this level. Most of the pupils currently taking the course attain at least average standards in practical work. The majority of pupils, especially those with special educational needs in Year 10 (the vast majority), find the theory of the subject difficult and attain below average standards. Many of these pupils spell anatomical words correctly, the result of the teachers' insistence on high standards.
233. In both key stages the majority of pupils, including the significant number with special educational needs, make good progress. They benefit from good teaching that mixes previously learned work well with new skills and tactics, resulting in good knowledge and understanding and skilful performance. Pupils are encouraged to take a pride in their work and to make best use of time to practise and improve their skills. The vast majority respond well to these challenges.

234. The best progress is made in basketball and volleyball lessons by pupils in Year 10, who display a real determination to do well and succeed. The high participation rate in practical lessons is indicative of the pupils' enthusiasm and sustained commitment. Pupils work very well with partners and in groups. They try hard to help one another to learn and improve. In competitive situations pupils play fairly and with due respect for rules. Pupils' behaviour and standard of dress in lessons are very good. The files of work of pupils taking the GCSE examination are well maintained and neat.
235. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and remains much as found in 1996. In about a quarter of the lessons it is very good, in about half it is good, and in the remainder it is satisfactory. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and in most lessons expect much from pupils. In most lessons teachers group pupils according to their prior attainment and set tasks that challenge them all. This strategy is used very effectively in several games lessons in both key stages. In a few lessons teachers spend too long explaining to pupils what they have to do, instead of a short explanation and quick demonstration. The few pupils who, for whatever reason, do not participate in practical work are usually given work that involves them in relevant observation of how other pupils perform and learn. Pupils are now appropriately involved in planning and evaluating either their own work or that of others.
236. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met. The balance between the areas of study in Key Stage 3 is reasonable and some dance is now included in the programme for all pupils. The time for traditional summer games, however, is minimal and does not enable pupils to attain good standards of performance. The time for each of two activities in Key Stage 4 has been increased and pupils now study these activities to an appropriate depth. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and usually accurately. Insufficient use is made of this information, however, to identify where curricular change might be appropriate.
237. Overall the management of the subject is sound, but too much reliance is placed on informal monitoring and evaluation by the specialists themselves. There is insufficient monitoring of the department's work from outside the department. The management of health and safety issues has been tackled satisfactorily and a formal assessment of some of the risks has been made. About a fifth of the pupils (mainly boys) are regularly involved in one or more of a sound range of extracurricular activities. Opportunities for girls are limited. Six teachers give up much time to coach, supervise and officiate at these activities that afford pupils many good opportunities to enhance their skills and their personal and social development.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

238. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment ranges from above to well below average, but is average overall. There is a small minority who reach a standard well above average, completing large amounts of work additional to that set. Work by the majority of pupils is thoughtful and shows that they can apply what they learn to their own beliefs. Pupils know, for example, about the Sikh religion, reflecting on the nature of God by considering the qualities of someone they love. Pupils have sound knowledge of religious symbols and expression. They discuss issues such as prejudice and gain good understanding of how experiences affect people who are treated in different ways. Lower-attaining pupils improve both their literacy skills and their understanding as, for example, when considering the meaning of a range of words and phrases in relation to marriage.
239. Although a minority of exercise books have high standards of presentation, written work in class often lacks care. Pupils' oral responses are, overall, of a higher standard than their written ones. By the end of the key stage, pupils gain a good knowledge of the main religions and of current issues.

For instance, during the National Festival for Religious Education the school held a *Focus on Faith* day. Pupils watched videos on Christianity and the Sikh religion with visitors from those faiths, asking the visitors some of life's fundamental questions. Their conclusions showed a deepened awareness about personal belief. Pupils wrote, for example: "they all say there is only one God, but there are loads of ways you can believe and ways you can pray." "I have learned a lot about religion. I think it gets very interesting." Or "I've begun to think deeply about things I've never thought about before."

240. In Key Stage 4, the subject is provided only for those taking the GCSE full course. Standards on this GCSE course have rapidly improved to a good level. The examination was taken for the first time in 1997 when, out of twelve entries, only one pupil gained a grade above level C (an A\*). In 1998, out of 8 entries, one third gained grades A-C, and in 1999, out of a similar number of entries, three-fifths reached the same level. Higher numbers are expected in future years when all pupils will, for the first time, have studied the subject throughout Key Stage 3.
241. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is average. Higher attainers have a good understanding about aspects such as the diversity of reasons for going on pilgrimage. They generally reflect well on, and show, both sides of an argument. Sometimes evidence is not, however, brought together logically for a well-argued conclusion. The work of lower attainers tends to have poor spelling and grammar and a lack of understanding of key concepts. In Year 10, pupils reach an average standard overall. They have a fair understanding of, for example, the Eucharist. Those from different faiths show a clear understanding of the similarities between different religious beliefs on such matters as prayer, meditation and humility. Standards are higher in oral work than in writing.
242. In the sixth form there is no planned syllabus and the subject is not timetabled. There are occasional opportunities for pupils to study religions by other means – as, for example, on the sociology of religion. Some pupils make overseas visits to India and The Gambia, whereby they can experience the Sikh and Muslim way of life at first hand. For example, a few pupils visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar or saw groups of people reading the Koran by the roadside during Ramadan in The Gambia.
243. Pupils' learning in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall in lessons, and good over the key stage in relation to the amount they learn and understand. Within a lesson the number of pupils who volunteer to answer questions often increases, as they gain confidence and understanding through very good teaching. Pupils work particularly well with partners and are more willing to discuss issues when in smaller groups. In the majority of classes they are hardworking and attentive. Where a small minority of pupils are disruptive, they are dealt with firmly and do not usually interfere with other pupils' learning. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour overall are satisfactory and in nearly half the lessons they are good (sometimes very good). Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in their learning. Classroom assistants make a strong contribution. Two classes, however, have insufficient support.
244. Pupils' learning is very good in Key Stage 4. Although some pupils are diffident, they think hard about the questions asked, admitting that they find them quite difficult. Pupils use knowledge they gain from other subjects, such as science, well. Considerable progress is made within a lesson because of the quality of teaching, which often carefully introduces pupils to new vocabulary and concepts. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good in all lessons at this key stage.
245. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good overall. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen, and in two lessons observed it was very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject,

plan very effectively and time sections of the lesson carefully, so maintaining a good pace. They show deep understanding of the need to explain religious vocabulary clearly in order to increase pupils' own vocabulary and understanding. Relationships are very good. Teachers are genuinely interested in the pupils' responses and ideas and engage in individual discussions of high quality with them. Teachers use assessment well during lessons to help them to plan future work, but formal long-term assessment, though planned, is not in place. In a small minority of lessons expectations of pupils are inaccurate, such as when discussing ageism or when written expectations are too high. The result is that teachers have difficulty in keeping pupils' concentration.

246. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is very good overall. Teachers' very good subject knowledge, clear planning, good pace and a deep understanding of the needs of the pupils ensure that pupils continually build on the knowledge they already have. Videos and artefacts are used well and pupils work with resources of good quality. Teachers make very good use of the board, aiding pupils' visual memory with diagrams and simple pictures. Probing questions are posed in a relaxed and effective style, and a quiet individual approach helps less confident pupils to discuss issues with the teacher. The department has no IT software specific to the subject. Access to computers is minimal, but some coursework in Key Stage 4 is word processed well. Some written tasks are, however, undemanding, particularly for homework.
247. The head of department does not teach the subject this year, since two specialist teachers have been appointed to take all lessons. These recent appointments do not, however, provide enough timetabled time for the subject to meet legal requirements in Key Stage 4 (or in the sixth form), where no RE is provided other than for the small number taking GCSE. Resources are often new and are sufficient for what is at present taught. The subject is supported by a good range of books in the library, well-carpeted rooms and displays of good quality. The scheme of work is no longer well matched to the needs of specialist teachers in the department. References to the subject in the school's prospectus do not clearly indicate to parents exactly what is taught and do not refer sufficiently to the Agreed Syllabus. Although good improvements have been made since the last inspection, not enough has been done overall, since timetabled provision for the subject still does not fully meet statutory requirements.