

INSPECTION REPORT

THE WOODROFFE SCHOOL

LYME REGIS

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113901

Head: Mr Kerrigan Redman

Reporting inspector: Michael Buckley
30517

Dates of inspection: 27-31 March 2000

Inspection number: 186696

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Uplyme Road Lyme Regis Dorset
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chairman of governors:	Mrs Gwen Chessell
Date of previous inspection:	15 January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Michael Buckley	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Rosemary Burgess	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its students?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern languages	
Steven Cushing	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	
		Design and technology	
Veronica Kerr		Science	
		Special educational needs	
Jack Mallinson	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
David Morris	Team inspector	Art	
		Music	
Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Equality of opportunity	
William Robson	Team inspector	English	
Hamish Wilkie	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Vernon Williams	Team inspector	Geography	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Woodroffe School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged from 11 to 18 years. At the time of the inspection, it had 866 students on roll, including 146 in the sixth form. This is slightly smaller than other comprehensive schools with sixth forms nationally. The number on roll has been rising and the sixth form is growing. The school takes students from a wide area around the seaside town of Lyme Regis, on the Dorset and Devon borders, where the socio-economic profile of the community is mixed. Only 51 students (6 per cent) are known to be eligible for free school meals, a proportion which is below the national average. A very low proportion of the students come from a minority ethnic heritage and none is at an early stage of learning English. There are 274 students on the school's register of special educational needs, which is a comparatively high figure, nationally. Ten of these have statements defining the nature of additional help they require. This proportion is below the national average. Attainment on entry is affected by the proximity of a popular grammar school and there are proportionately fewer of the highest-attaining students. Nevertheless, the attainment of the majority of students when they enter the school is slightly above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school providing high quality education. Students achieve standards well above the national averages in the tests for 14 year olds, the GCSE and A level examinations and the courses for the GNVQ. These standards are improving each year. The results for 14 year olds are better than the average for schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals although the results of the GCSE examinations are not as good, by this comparison. Standards of behaviour and the quality of relationships at all levels are very good and students show the highest levels of enthusiasm for everything the school offers. The quality of teaching is very good overall and consistent throughout the school. All aspects of the National Curriculum are covered, except for religious education in the sixth form, and the variety of extra-curricular activities for all age groups is very good. Vocational education is very good but the programme of personal and social education is not well developed. The school fosters very good interpersonal relationships and it is a cohesive and mutually supportive society. Arrangements for the personal and academic support of students are very good. Parents are very well informed about their children's progress and give the school strong support. The leadership and management of the school are good and the governors are very well informed. The school's income and expenditure are low when compared with similar schools nationally but resources are well managed. The school is making good progress and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students achieve high standards academically and in many other fields of endeavour.
- The school fosters an enthusiasm for learning.
- Very good teaching allows students to make good progress.
- There is very good provision for the moral, social and cultural development of students.
- Pastoral care, the personal development of students, behaviour and relationships are all very good.
- Relationships with parents are very good.
- Students with statements of special educational need are very well supported.

What could be improved

- The management and organisation of science, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- The use of new technology across the curriculum and for managerial and administrative purposes.
- Procedures for securing the health and safety of all in the school.
- Arrangements for supporting the development of high standards of literacy in all subjects.
- The allocation of non-teaching time to senior and middle managers in the school.

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 good progress since it was last inspected in January 1996. The accommodation for many subjects and resources for information and communications technology have been greatly improved although there is no provision for a networked system of computers. There is now a policy for work with students who have special educational needs and the guidance in the Code of Practice has been followed. A programme of personal and social education has been introduced but the scheme of work is not well developed and not all staff have adapted to the appropriate teaching approaches. Good systems have been developed for evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the school's policies and the curriculum and timetable have been reviewed and modified. Statutory requirements for religious education are now met, except in the sixth form, but the school still does not fully meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. There have been very good improvements in physical education and good improvements in almost all the other subjects. The good attainment and generally high standards reported after the last inspection have been maintained and, in most cases, improved.

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	C	B	B	D
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	B	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The attainment of students in standard tests and external examinations has improved year on year. Fourteen year olds are achieving standards well above the national average and above the average for similar schools in English, mathematics and science. Overall, students are about two terms in advance of the nationally expected standards by the end of the key stage. The average GCSE points score is below the average for similar schools, indicating that there were comparatively fewer students achieving the highest grades. This reflects the pattern of attainment on entry to the school. However, the percentage of students who obtained five or more A* to C grades was well above the national average. The average points score of candidates entered for two or more A levels was above the national average in 1999 and this figure has been improving steadily over the past seven years. The increasing numbers of students following the GNVQ courses at advanced and intermediate levels are also achieving results which are above the national averages. Observation of lessons and the scrutiny of students' written work show that, at Key Stages 3 and 4, standards are well above those expected nationally in English, above national expectations in mathematics and in line with expectations in science. Overall standards are good in all subjects across the school. The school set realistic targets for 1999, based on detailed assessments, but the results were better than anticipated and the targets for future years have been appropriately revised.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good.
Attendance	Good.

Students' interest and involvement in all the school's activities are excellent. They concentrate well and have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is generally very good. Students are polite and considerate. There is almost no bullying or oppressive behaviour. Strict discipline for certain offences has brought a comparatively high level of fixed-term exclusions but it is effective and there have been no permanent exclusions in the past year. The quality of relationships at all levels across the school is exemplary and students show respect, care and consideration for others. They are keen to take responsibility. Attendance and punctuality are good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of the lessons seen, good or better in 78 per cent of them and very good or excellent in 30 per cent. The standards of teaching are consistently good across all subjects and key stages although they are more frequently very good in the sixth form. Teaching is less often very good or better in science, information and communications technology and religious education. Particular strengths of teaching are the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects, their enthusiasm and high expectations, excellent relationships with students which underpin very good management of classes and very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers plan effectively and use a wide range of teaching strategies. The few relative weaknesses are in the teaching of basic skills, particularly literacy, the identification of a variety of tasks matched to students' individual needs and an inconsistent approach to homework. Day-to-day assessment is not always used effectively to help students recognise what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and	Good.

cultural development	
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements except for religious education in the sixth form but it offers a very good range of choice to the sixth form students. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Personal and social education is not well developed. There are very constructive links with other schools. Students with special educational needs are well supported but the administrative arrangements are time-consuming. The school supports students' moral, social and cultural development very well and makes satisfactory provision for their spiritual development. Support and guidance are very good and students' development is well monitored. The formal procedures for ensuring health and safety need to be improved.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory.

The head provides strong educational leadership and effective management. Governors are very well informed and closely involved with developments. The senior management team, the heads of department and the heads of year work hard and are strongly committed to the school's success. However, the allocation of non-teaching time does not permit them to carry out their responsibilities in the most effective way. Management of the science department is unsatisfactory. The number, qualifications and experience of teaching and non-teaching staff are good, as is the school's accommodation. The school is experiencing difficulties with finance which are not of its own making. There is a comparatively small amount of non-teaching time and the money available for purchasing resources is little more than it was in 1994. Financial management is very effective and the school rigorously applies the principles of best value. The school provides good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high academic standards achieved. • The happy and stable atmosphere. • Emphasis is not just on academic standards. • Good moral values, behaviour and discipline. • Good relationships with parents. • Good information to parents. • Very good extra-curricular provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistency in homework. • A few felt that they were not well informed about the children's progress.

The inspectors agree with all the above comments except that they feel that the school provides very good information to parents about progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The results of the National Curriculum tests and assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 and of the tests of cognitive ability administered by the school early in the autumn term show that the attainment of students when they enter the school in Year 7 is slightly above the national average. The scrutiny of students' written work, lesson observations and other inspection evidence produced the same finding. However, there is evidence that attainment on entry is below that for schools having a similar proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals. Additionally, tests of cognitive ability show that there are comparatively few entrants achieving at the highest levels. This evidence bears out the school's own perception that many of the potentially highest attainers are enrolled at a local selective grammar school and that the school does not, therefore, have a fully representative intake. There is also some evidence to indicate that levels of cognitive ability, reading and spelling are falling slightly, year on year. Students make good progress overall and about two out of every three stay on after sixteen for further studies. Many of these go on to higher education.

2. The school's results in the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national averages in English, mathematics and science. The proportions of students who obtained higher levels than expected nationally were also well above the national averages in English and science and above the average in mathematics. Teachers' assessments of attainment were generally lower than the actual test results, particularly at the higher levels. The test results in English and science were above the average for schools with a similar proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals and results in mathematics were well above this average. However, comparatively few students reached higher levels in mathematics. This is illustrated by the fact that the average point scores in English and science were well above the national averages for those subjects and above the averages for similar schools, whereas the average points score for mathematics was just above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. This pattern has been maintained over the past four years, with standards in mathematics improving more rapidly than in the other two subjects. Overall, students are about two terms in advance of the nationally expected standards by the end of the key stage. Over the past four years, the performance of boys has been well above the national average for boys in all three subjects and the performance of girls has been above that for girls in all three subjects. Girls in the school are outperforming the boys but by a smaller margin than is seen nationally.

3. In 1999, teachers' assessments in the non-core subjects showed that, at the end of Key Stage 3, standards in information and communications technology, music and physical education were above the national averages for those subjects. Attainment was below the national averages for history, geography and modern languages and in line with the national averages for the other subjects. Attainment in information and communications technology was particularly high, with 93 per cent of students obtaining the expected level or better. There has been a very marked improvement in this subject over the past three years while the standards in history and geography and, to a lesser extent, in art and music, have declined over the same period.

4. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, almost 60 per cent of students obtained five or more A* to C grades, which is well above the national average, and the proportion of

students obtaining five or more A* to G grades in the examinations was above the national average. The percentage of five or more A* to C grades was also above the average for similar schools but the percentage of A* to G grades was comparatively lower. The overall average point score was 41.3, which is above the national average. Girls and boys both achieved average point scores which were above their respective national averages. National data show that the school's results in the GCSE examinations are improving over time and at a higher rate than is seen nationally. The school's own figures show a steady increase in the percentage of A* to B grades since 1993. The average GCSE points score is below the average for similar schools, indicating once more that there were comparatively fewer students achieving the highest grades.

5. The results in English and mathematics were well above the national averages for those subjects and the results for science were above the national averages. The 1999 GCSE results were best in art and design, design and technology, French, German, history and mathematics. There has been a significant improvement over the past two years in English literature, German, French, double science, geography and physical education. Results have also improved in history, design and technology, art and drama but there has been some falling off in standards in business studies, media studies and religious education. There was a slight drop in standards in music between 1998 and 1999.

6. The average points score of candidates entered for one A level examination was below the national average in 1999 and there has been a decline in this figure over the past three years. However, this is largely a reflection of the fact that fewer students are taking this option and more are taking two or more A levels or following courses for the GNVQ awards. The average points score of candidates entered for two or more A levels was above the national average in 1999. This figure has been improving steadily over the past seven years. The increasing numbers of students following the GNVQ courses have also been successful, with results improving at the advanced level, where they are well above the national average, and at the intermediate level, where they are above the national average.

7. Inspection evidence shows that standards in English are well above the nationally expected levels at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4. By the end of the sixth form, students now achieve standards which are above those required to obtain pass grades on their courses. Students arrive in school with above average attainment in English in Year 7 and make good progress during Key Stage 3. In Year 9, nearly all students can express their views clearly and confidently and many use Standard English fluently. Most read aloud with confidence and good expression and they also read widely. The final presentation of written work is usually neat and accurate. Many students write effectively in a range of styles, such as those used in newspaper reports or in narrative accounts. By the end of Key Stage 4, speaking and listening skills are very well developed. Students continue to read widely and many develop good analytical skills, giving personal responses to plays such as *Macbeth* and Miller's *The Crucible*. Writing skills are generally well developed and students spell and punctuate their work accurately. Students in middle and higher sets employ a range of writing styles, including poetry. Most students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress and, in the present Year 13, standards are above average.

8. Students at the end of Key Stage 3 achieve good standards in drama. They develop particularly good speaking and listening skills and higher-attaining students achieve very high standards. For example, they gave a powerful representation of the reaction of black South African parents to racist legislation. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students attaining grades A*-C is well above the national average every year. Standards of work in the sixth form are also good. Standards of literacy are good in all

subjects although some lower-attaining students have difficulty reading and spelling new technical terms. Most students can read aloud fluently and their writing skills are well developed. Students develop their speaking and listening skills through discussion and debate across the curriculum. Literacy is better developed in some subjects, such as physical education and geography, than in others, such as science and music. This situation is improving as the school's literacy policy is beginning to take effect.

9. In mathematics, students generally achieve well across both key stages and they make very good progress in the sixth form. Inspection evidence confirms that students of all ages are working at above the nationally expected levels and particularly high standards are found in some sixth form classes. Standards of numeracy are generally good and the mathematics department is trying to raise these standards even higher by regularly exercising mental skills in almost all lessons. Mathematical skills are reinforced effectively in several other subjects. Graphs and other forms of calculation are used in science and geography, for instance, accurate measurements are required in design technology, data analysis is carried out efficiently in physical education and good use is also made of space and shape in art. Particularly effective use of data-handling is made in the vocational courses in the sixth form and students use advanced statistics in their A level geography course.

10. On the evidence from classroom observations, the scrutiny of students' written work and discussions with students, attainment in science at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the nationally expected level. Students have positive attitudes and the quality of their learning and the progress they make are generally good. Progress through Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is satisfactory. Attainment in the work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 is close to the nationally expected levels. For example, all students in a top set in Year 10 could provide clear explanations of how the nervous system operated. Students in Year 11 could explain the relationship between acidic or basic oxides and the position of metals and non-metals in the periodic table of elements. Attainment in the sixth form is below the standard required for a good pass grade in the A level examinations but this represents satisfactory achievement when compared with attainment at GCSE and most are finding A level work difficult.

11. At the end of Key Stage 3, the standard of the work seen during the inspection was above the nationally expected levels in design and technology, modern languages and religious education and it was in line with expectations in all the other subjects. At the end of Key Stage 4, work was above the nationally expected levels in art, design and technology, modern languages and physical education and overall standards were never less than satisfactory in any subject. Work in the sixth form was above the average level required for the courses being followed in art and physical education and in line with expectations in all the other lessons seen but one, where only one student was involved. Students' achievements in the non-core subjects were good or better in all subjects at Key Stage 3 except for information and communications technology, where they were satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, achievements against prior attainment were very good in art and physical education and generally good in the other subjects, except for information and communications technology, geography and music, where they were satisfactory. Achievement in religious education at Key Stage 4 was satisfactory.

12. Attainment in business studies was at the expected levels in the one GCSE group and the two A level lessons seen and students were generally making good progress. In the one A level media studies class and the single A level general studies class seen, attainment was above the expected levels and students showed that they were acquiring good knowledge and understanding of these topics. At Key Stages 3 and 4, students

generally showed a good level of interest in personal and social education and, where it was possible to make an evaluation, their attainment was at an appropriate level. However, achievement was not satisfactory in two lessons where teachers had not adapted their approach successfully to suit the subject matter. Learning and attainment were good in the only careers lesson seen.

13. The school has set overall targets for improvement at the ends of both key stages and for the sixth form. However, the results at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the GCSE examinations in 1999 were significantly better than predicted and, consequently, the targets set beforehand have already been exceeded, or equalled, and the school has made some appropriate readjustments. This has also been necessary with the targets for the advanced GNVQ courses but the overall target for A levels still sets a realistic challenge. The differences in attainment between boys and girls were quite marked in the past but the school has worked successfully to remedy the situation, reducing the gap in the GCSE results from 33 per cent in 1993, to 18 per cent in 1997, to 9 per cent in 1999.

14. Students with special educational needs always make satisfactory progress and often their progress and the quality of their achievements are good. Those in the sixth form make good progress. The records maintained by the heads of year show that the standards achieved by the majority of these students improve as they move through the school and all but two of those in last year's Year 11 obtained at least grade G passes in the GCSE examinations.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Students have maintained the high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to school life noted in the last inspection report. Relationships are very good and are as good as they were four years ago. Students' attitudes to school are very good and have a positive impact on learning. They are very enthusiastic about many aspects of school life and their involvement in extra-curricular activities is excellent at both key stages and in the sixth form. The majority of students are involved in some activity in their own time, either during the lunch hour or after school. They take part in rehearsals and perform in public, as well as participating in a wide variety of sports, musical events and the combined cadet force. The take-up for outdoor activities and foreign exchange visits is very good.

16. In lessons, students are well motivated and sustain concentration well, usually for the full hour, although a few lessons were seen at Key Stage 4 where there was a lack of real interest and intellectual rigour. Students at all key stages are keen to learn and to do well and they contribute well to discussions. Behaviour is very good in most lessons and movement between lessons is orderly. Behaviour at lunchtimes and in assemblies is very good and often excellent. Discipline is strict and forty-nine students were excluded for a fixed term during the last school year for abusive behaviour or for offences connected with smoking, neither of which is tolerated on school premises or on the journeys between school and home. The strict line taken by the school for certain misdemeanours is effective and the number of re-offenders is very small. Students and staff work in an environment free of oppressive behaviour and incidents of bullying, racism or sexism are very few.

17. Relationships in the school are very good, both between teachers and students and between peer groups and different groups of students. Students enjoy working in pairs and they work well and collaboratively in groups as their lessons demand. They help each other and support their peers, particularly those with special needs. They show an understanding of the impact their actions may have on others and show respect for feelings, values and beliefs which may differ from their own.

18. Students' willingness and ability to use initiative and demonstrate personal responsibility are very good. They participate in school decisions through year group councils from Year 7, although students at Key Stage 4 are less involved. Students in Year 11 and in the sixth form apply to serve as prefects and carry out their responsibilities well, for example, performing examination duties or acting as guides on Open Day. Sixth form students have an extensive involvement in the school community through, for example, paired reading with students in Year 7, studying for a sports leadership award, helping students with special educational needs or assisting with refreshments at school events. Students in Year 10 take a responsible attitude in arranging their placements for work experience. Many students make good use of the library facilities to further their studies, especially in the sixth form.

19. Attendance is good. The rate of 91.4 per cent for 1998-99 is slightly above the national average for comprehensive schools. For the first half of the current school year, the attendance figure was better still, at 92.4 per cent. The rate of unauthorised absence, where a satisfactory explanation for absence is not received, is slightly below the national average. Attendance in all year groups at Key Stages 3 and 4 is above 90 per cent. The rate drops below this in the sixth form, where students and tutors have a more relaxed attitude to registration. Students of all ages are generally punctual in the morning although this is less so in the sixth form. The time allocated for movement between lessons helps lessons to start on time.

20. Attendance at Key Stages 3 and 4 has been maintained at between 91 and 92 per cent since the last inspection but, as then, attendance in the sixth form is below 90 per cent.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching in the school is very good with only a few minor weaknesses. As a result, the majority of students achieve well across all subjects. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of the lessons seen, good or better in 78 per cent and very good or excellent in 30 per cent of lessons. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only three of the one hundred and seventy-one lessons seen. Although these three were all at Key Stage 3, teaching was still good or better in 77 per cent of lessons at that key stage. The proportion of good or very good teaching was similar at Key Stage 4 and it was best in the sixth form, where the proportion rose to 81 per cent. Furthermore, teaching was very good or excellent in half of the lessons seen in the sixth form. Overall, teaching was very good in art and physical education, good in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages and music and satisfactory in science, information and communications technology and religious education. Teaching was also good overall in the few lessons seen in careers education, business studies, media studies and general studies. It was not so strong in personal and social education although it was still satisfactory overall.

22. All of the key elements of good teaching are performed skilfully and to high professional standards. Particular strengths lie in the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding which enable them to generate enthusiasm for their subjects and to respond flexibly to students' enquiries, adapting their approaches to suit the particular needs of groups or individuals. Teachers also possess a very good range of strategies which they use effectively. In modern languages, staff display students' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the students' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. History teachers in the sixth form show a personal interest in their

students' progress, giving them the freedom to choose their special assignments and providing them with an unusually wide range of books for further study. As a result, students make good progress. They become deeply involved with their research and write revealingly about the way they have chosen to work.

23. Planning and preparation for lessons are generally very good, particularly in history, modern languages, mathematics, geography and physical education. Lessons are often conducted with good pace and variety. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics group with a significant number of students with special educational needs, the teacher kept every student occupied throughout by well-timed and chosen changes of tasks and maintained their interest by injecting an element of fun into the activities. Teachers are excellent role-models. In religious education, for example, they listen to students' opinions and treat them with respect. In almost all cases, teachers' excellent relationships with students underpin the very good management of their classes, creating an atmosphere in which good learning can take place.

24. Most teachers have high expectations and their students respond positively to the challenges and encouragement which are offered, making good progress and achieving high standards. This was demonstrated very well in an excellent Year 7 music lesson in which there was a high proportion of students with special educational needs. The idea of musical questions and answers was introduced and the teacher worked around the circle, playing a question and encouraging each student to make an appropriate response. All did this successfully a number of times with increasing confidence. The lesson was conducted at a cracking pace and demanded the students' concentration the whole time; all levels of ability had been challenged and had effectively met the challenge. This was a model lesson in which learning, achievement and creative effort were quite excellent. In most subjects, particularly in art and physical education, students are encouraged to evaluate their work. As a result, they try hard, work productively and make good progress. For example, students in Year 11 practised crossing a football in pairs and small groups and then under match conditions, improving the height and depth of their crosses, the timing of attacking runs and methods of defence.

25. Students with special educational needs who are withdrawn from class for individual or group work are very well taught. Support for these students when they are in class is usually good and often very good. Tasks are well matched to their needs in physical education, art, music, mathematics and design and technology but, in other subjects, such as geography, history and science, this is often not well done.

26. In a few areas, although standards are satisfactory, there are some comparative weaknesses. Lessons are not always planned in such a way that the basic skills in literacy and numeracy are suitably employed and developed. Although this is done very effectively in some subjects, such as physical education and geography, there are other areas, such as science and religious education, where opportunities for development are not taken. Skills in information and communications technology are not employed across the curriculum although some good use is made of computers, particularly in art and business studies. Teachers' assessment of students' progress and attainments is not carried out with sufficient rigour in science, religious education or music. As a consequence, students are not always fully aware of what they know and can do or of the progress they are making and how they might improve. Homework is generally used well, and it is very effective in English, but, in religious education, for instance, it is not used to extend learning opportunities at Key Stage 4. Two instances of unsatisfactory teaching were seen in personal and social education, where the teachers had not adapted their approaches successfully to the topics. The teaching was too didactic and some students became bored

or distracted. In a small number of lessons, work is not pitched at the appropriate level for students with special educational needs.

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

27. The school provides a curriculum that is well balanced at Key Stages 3 and 4 and broad in the sixth form. It meets statutory requirements at all key stages, except that there is not enough time to teach religious education adequately in the sixth form. Requirements for the teaching of information technology are met at Key Stages 3 and 4 but the cross-curricular elements are not adequately planned, particularly in mathematics and English. Governors are linked to the teaching departments and are generally well informed about curricular matters. They are closely involved in all curricular developments and decisions through their curriculum and staffing committee. All students have equal access to the subjects offered at all key stages and the time provided on the timetable meets the national recommendations of twenty-five hours a week. Five minutes are allowed for movement between classes, thus ensuring that the full allocation of time can be used.

28. At Key Stage 3, the time given to each of the subjects is close to national averages. The organisation of the curriculum is effective. For all subjects except personal and social education, physical education, games and information skills, the students are divided into a higher-attaining band and a support band. Classes within each band all have an equal range of ability. All students study French throughout both key stages. The most able among them take German in addition as an alternative to one period of games. These students can choose to study both languages at Key Stage 4.

29. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is generally satisfactory, with reasonable breadth, balance and allocation of time for most subjects. Current weaknesses include the provision for music, which is taught partly after school and partly as an alternative to information technology. Religious education in Year 11 is taught alternately with careers and personal development. The time allocated to religious education for GCSE is insufficient for teaching to the required standard. In science, most students take the double course but one set takes the single science course and a small group of higher-attaining students takes the three separate sciences. The time allocated for this option and for the single science course is the same as that allowed for double science and these arrangements are neither efficient nor effective. Next year, the school plans to place music firmly within the timetable as an alternative to technology. Students in Year 10 currently have one open option, which gives them the opportunity to study both history and geography, and they can choose either art or drama, music, business studies, or physical education as a GCSE subject.

30. The strength of the sixth form curriculum lies in its very broad range of subjects, both academic and vocational. Eighteen subjects are now offered at A level, with additional options for one-year courses leading to AS certification or to a GCSE award. GNVQ courses include advanced art and design, leisure and tourism, intermediate health and social care and leisure and tourism, with NVQ courses also available. All students take games, general studies, and a core lesson to teach careers and such skills as coping with interviews and budgeting. However, some options attract a very small number of students although the school accepts this in order to enlarge the sixth form and attract students from elsewhere.

31. Students with special educational needs are taught the standard school curriculum for most of the time. Occasionally, those with statements identifying the particular nature of

help they need are withdrawn from class for individual teaching. These arrangements work effectively. All students have regular lessons in personal and social educational education. Health and sex education, together with the drugs awareness element, are covered effectively but the quality of the overall programme and its organisation are not well developed. There is good provision for careers education, supported by the very good facilities in the careers library, where students are encouraged to undertake their own research. Work experience is well organised and successful, despite the limited opportunities available in the near vicinity of the school. All students in Year 10 are placed in work for two weeks in June and all sixth-formers also have opportunities for work experience. This good provision is made possible by the quality of the links which the school has developed with local businesses and industry.

32. There is good planning for the continuity and progression of students' education from one stage of learning to the next, despite the difficulties caused by taking pupils from many primary schools. Senior staff attend meetings of teachers from these schools in both the East Devon and the West Dorset areas. Pupils in Year 6 of their primary education visit the school for a day in the summer term and sample lessons. The English department has fostered particularly close links for the development of literacy and staff have designed a project to ease the transition between the phases of education. The school has very good links with the Southampton Institute and Exeter University, whose library is much used by sixth formers, particularly those studying history.

33. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which are highly successful in extending and enriching the curriculum. A new sports hall has added to the already good provision. Most sports are offered, with a take-up by students that is higher than the national average. School teams tour abroad and there are annual ski trips and foreign exchange visits. Further opportunities in music and drama are very strong, with a junior and senior choir, wind bands, a jazz band, an orchestra and an early music group, which introduces students to Renaissance music and early instruments. There are two drama productions a year and many visits to theatres, poetry festivals and speaking competitions. Students have recently worked with the National Youth Music Theatre Outreach on a production of the musical play *Torchbearers*.

34. Several weaknesses in the curriculum were noted at the time of the last inspection. The school has responded effectively to these by conducting its own internal reviews and by inviting external advisers to make recommendations. Improvements are many. The school now runs a two-week timetable consisting of fifty hour-long periods. This allows more flexibility and most teaching departments are now satisfied with the allocation of time to their subjects. The previous inequalities of opportunity in some subjects, notably English, mathematics and modern languages, have been remedied by modifying the size of teaching groups. There has been an improvement in the allocation of time for religious education, although it is still not satisfactory, and this will be further improved next year.

35. The previous report criticised arrangements for those lower-attaining students who were not entered for examinations. Their number is now much reduced and the low number of failures at GCSE - below the national average - is evidence of improvement. Drama has been given more time on the timetable and its status has been raised with the building of the new drama studio. The number of students in the sixth form is greater than ever before, one result of increased provision.

36. The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students. It has a clear set of aims, with a strong emphasis on students' achievement and development, and these are shared by teachers. Although the school

does not have an explicit policy for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, there is a statement of intent in the prospectus.

37. While the school does not fully meet legal requirements for a daily act of worship, assemblies are well organised and provide good opportunities for reflection on moral and social issues. They are well used to celebrate students' achievements and they occasionally include an act of worship. Opportunities for the spiritual development of students across the curriculum are limited but good opportunities are provided in history, where students investigate the beliefs of American Indians, study the mysticism of Islam and reflect on the horrors of war and the tragedy of the Holocaust. In religious education, students consider ultimate questions relating to the meaning of life and reflect on ideas surrounding life after death. Visits to places of worship, such as Salisbury Cathedral, enable them to reflect on the past generations of worshippers and on the beliefs they shared. The use of moments of stillness and of paintings and music fosters students' spiritual development.

38. The school provides very good support for the moral development of its students. The prospectus sets out the system of rewards and sanctions and students are aware of the standards of behaviour and effort that are required from them. Within the school environment, in and out of lessons, teachers provide good role-models and students are expected to maintain high standards of courtesy and behaviour. Discussion of moral issues takes place in many subjects. For example, in geography students discuss the effects of global warming and the use of finite resources. Students consider morality and their own values in religious education and their implications when discussing issues such as the medical ethics of euthanasia and abortion. Inspirational leaders, such as Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi are studied and racism is investigated in history, religious education and English. In many lessons, the need for co-operation and fairness is emphasised. For example, in physical education, students are taught the virtues of honesty and fair play. During the year, students raise money for charitable causes, most recently in response to the flood disaster appeal in Mozambique.

39. Very good opportunities are provided for the social development of students in the many clubs and activities provided by the teachers. A wide range of visits takes place overseas and in Britain, where students have opportunities to interact with others in a variety of situations. The annual entry to the Ten Tors race and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions provide students with opportunities to push themselves under pressure whilst working as a team. Entry into the 'Youth Speaks' competition helps them to develop confidence, as do the various school productions that encourage collaboration and independence, such as the dance festival performed to parents and friends during the inspection.

40. Links with the community are strengthened by the sixth form community service programme and by the association of the school with the Bridport Special School. Sixth form students are encouraged to support the work of the school through the paired reading scheme and by exercising their responsibilities as prefects. The school council enables students of all ages to make some contribution to the work of the school. The extended lunch hour enables students and staff to use the hall as a relaxed and sociable eating area where they can interact positively with one another.

41. Students' multicultural awareness is raised by overseas trips, such as the exchange visits to Germany and France, and skiing and sporting visits. Visits to such places as Barcelona, New York and South Africa provide valuable opportunities to experience other cultures. A recent visit to a school in Slovakia has established new links with

schoolchildren overseas who have had very different experiences. Fewer opportunities are provided for understanding and appreciating the cultural diversity of Britain today but students do learn about African dance in physical education and they use aboriginal and Islamic patterns in the design of textiles. In religious education, they study other cultures when investigating other belief systems, such as the halal food laws, and they listen to talks by representatives of other faiths.

42. The provision for the cultural and aesthetic development of students is very good. It is supported by visits to theatres and art galleries and by the concerts performed by the many music groups within the school. Music is used as a teaching aid in several subjects. For example, appropriate music was played in history lessons about the development of Islamic civilisation and about the Middle Ages. Students are widely encouraged to develop their own talents. Poetry writing is encouraged in several areas as a form of self expression. For example, one of the English teachers shares her own work with students and a poetry evening was held last term. Students' own culture is explored in their study of local history and in visits to many places of historical and aesthetic interest.

43. There is no overview of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students which would enable the school to identify where opportunities are being overlooked, particularly opportunities for spiritual development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school provides very good care and guidance to its students but action on some matters affecting health and safety has been unsatisfactory. Child protection procedures are well established and heads of year take turns to act as co-ordinator for a period of three years. The present co-ordinator has recently taken up her post, following appropriate training. However, although staff are aware of their responsibilities for child protection, the procedures are not clearly stated in the staff handbook. There is a written policy for health and safety and staff are very careful to promote good health and safety standards. In physical education, for example, there is good safety awareness and emphasis is given to the practice of safe techniques in all lessons, both in the use of equipment and in contact sports. Maintenance checks and other procedures are routinely carried out and documented and there are full procedures for the identification of hazards and the school's health and safety committee meets frequently and reports regularly to the governors. However, there are no formal written risk assessments in any of the subject departments or for the school site as a whole and inspectors found some unsafe machinery in the technology workshops. This was withdrawn from service immediately it was pointed out to the head.

45. Educational and personal support and guidance for students are very good, and well promoted by the heads of year and their tutor teams. The well-established pastoral system enables tutors, and especially heads of year, to know their students well. This knowledge is backed up by full records on each student although there is no central system through the school. External agencies are appropriately used.

46. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Registration at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions meets statutory requirements. Heads of year receive regular reports of attendance and lists of absentees from the computerised system. There are no incentives to improve the attendance rate, which has not improved since the last inspection. Registration in the sixth form is not systematic.

47. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating oppressive behaviour. There is a clear policy and staff and students understand the system of rewards and sanctions, which have a positive effect on learning. In extreme cases, however, the range of strategies is limited. Students whose behaviour is abusive towards other students or staff are normally excluded for a short, fixed term. Although strict, this procedure appears effective in the majority of cases, with few re-offenders. Bullying in school is openly discussed from Year 7 and no bullying was evident during the inspection. Students report that heads of year deal with any cases of bullying well, although some of the older students do not feel that the 'bullying slips' are always an effective means of identifying bullies.

48. Heads of year maintain records and data of academic progress and personal development which enable them to encourage and support students well throughout their school career. The system is not centralised but each tutor or head of year is able to produce documentation which clearly tracks students' academic and social development. At Key Stage 4, the evidence collated enables tutors to identify students who are underachieving and parents and students are counselled in evening 'clinics'. Guidance received through the programme of personal and social education lessons is variable, depending upon the tutor. A full evaluation of the programme of personal and social education has not taken place since its introduction. Preparation for work experience, and guidance for careers, GCSE and post-16 options choices are good.

49. The progress made by students with statements of special educational needs is very well monitored by the teacher responsible and all reviews are conducted according to the Code of Practice. Individual education plans for students supported entirely by the school are managed by year heads and tutors. Students' success in managing their own behaviour is well monitored but their academic progress is generally not covered although the mathematics department monitors development in numeracy very well. The special educational needs department is always open and staffed. Students who have behavioural problems or who have difficulties in organising their work receive a great deal of extra support from special educational needs staff and from the school's pastoral system.

50. The previous report indicated that the school's policies for the assessment of students' attainment and progress were basically sound although there was a need to develop self-evaluation and to monitor the implementation of the policies across all subjects. Since that time, the school has acted to increase self-assessment across both key stages and has appointed a co-ordinator for school improvement. The latter appointment has led to the establishment of detailed monitoring of the attainment and progress of individual students at Key Stage 4, based on the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and updated regularly with results of further examinations and tests. The revised forecasts for GCSE points scores enable the school to pinpoint potential problems where students are underachieving or need further help. The system is successful and it also helps to analyse the value added by the school overall and by its individual departments.

51. At Key Stage 3, the school uses the scores in tests of cognitive ability for all years to guide the grouping of students into sets and to predict the results for the end-of-key-stage tests and assessments and for the GCSE examinations. The results obtained by individual pupils in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 are now adding further valuable information to that obtained from the school's own tests and assessments. The school's senior managers have begun to use a similar system for predicting performance in the sixth form, based on success in the GCSE examinations, and they recognise the need to develop similar systems for Key Stage 3. They will then be able to

analyse and monitor the performance of individual students and evaluate the value added across the whole school. The school will also be able to provide teachers with vital information to guide their planning and inform the support and advice they offer to students and their parents. Arrangements for assessment within departments remain slightly inconsistent. They work well in most departments but they are less effective in science, music and religious education. There is still a need for the school to review the consistency of application of its assessment policy. The present non-computerised data-base of records which is held in distributed form by heads of year is unsatisfactory in terms of its general availability to teachers and to the administration.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. About one-third of parents answered the survey of parental views and a smaller number attended the meeting with the registered inspector. They expressed positive views of the school and particularly praised the interesting range of activities provided outside lessons. Most parents consider that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best and they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. Parents at the meeting felt the school did all it could to involve parents and praised the teaching staff who enabled students to achieve their potential. They expressed some reservations about the amount of homework set and about the amount of information provided on their children's progress but these concerns were substantially outnumbered by the positive comments made about the school. Parents said the school had come a long way since the last inspection. They praised improvements in extra-curricular activities, better accommodation and facilities and improved examination results.

53. The school's links with parents are effective. Home-school agreements have been introduced after consultation with parents and the majority of students and their parents have signed them. The information provided to parents is very good. It includes a range of interesting and comprehensive documents as well as a full prospectus and the governors produce an informative annual report. Parents receive a booklet describing the courses that their children will be following in each year of Key Stage 3 and details of the options available for the GCSE and vocational courses at Key Stage 4. The sixth form prospectus clearly outlines the courses of study which are offered. Additionally, the school produces a very full bulletin of news each quarter, which is supplemented by letters to provide information about specific events. Parents are fully informed about their children's progress through a carefully planned series of full reports, progress cards or reviews, and consultation evenings.

54. Parents of students with special educational needs have a great deal of additional contact before their children enter the school and as much further contact as is needed afterwards. Parents are fully involved in all reviews and there is good communication between parents and the school through home visits and telephone calls and parents are welcomed into school at any time.

55. Parents make good contributions to learning at school and at home. Attendance at consultation evenings is reported to be high. Homework diaries are appropriately used, especially at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, parents are involved in the 'clinics' held to assist students who are identified as potential underachievers. Whenever problems arise, parents are involved at an early stage. They usually appreciate the school's concern and co-operate willingly. Parents contribute to the life of school by their attendance at performances, such as the dance evening held during the week of inspection. Some become involved in physical education as coaches, referees or umpires, and many support the department by attending matches or by providing transport. Groups of parents have

formed committees to support students' activities, such as the overseas rugby tour, the visit to Canada and the new play *Torchbearers*, and others have worked in the school in the evenings to provide meals for students engaged in extra-curricular activities. Many parents contribute by their involvement in fund-raising activities organised through the parent-teacher association, especially the 'Taste of Christmas' fair and the annual 'Duck Race'. Funds raised in these ways have provided extra resources for most subjects, as well as large items such as the stage lighting for the main hall.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The present head has been in post for almost seven years. Over this time, his strong and effective management and educational leadership have steered the school forward on many fronts. He and the senior staff, with the active support of the governors, took prompt action to rectify the issues identified by the last inspection and the school has made good progress since then.

57. A very extensive capital building programme has greatly improved the accommodation and facilities, most notably for physical education and drama. The school has drawn up an appropriate policy for its work with students who have special educational needs and the guidance in the Code of Practice has been followed. The school has significantly improved the facilities for information and communications technology, although the accommodation has not yet been modified to enable the school to have a properly networked system. Until this is done, the new technology cannot be fully used across the curriculum. There is now a programme of personal and social education but the scheme of work is not well developed and not all staff have adapted to the appropriate teaching approaches. Good systems have been developed for evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the school's policies and the curriculum and timetable have been reviewed and modified. The statutory requirements for religious education are now being met, except in Year 11 and in the sixth form, where the time allocation is not adequate. The school still does not fully meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship although this is partly because of the lack of an appropriate space in which to hold it.

58. There have been very good improvements in physical education and good improvements in almost all the other subjects except science, where the quality of management remains unsatisfactory. The good attainment and generally high standards reported after the last inspection have been maintained and, in most cases, improved. The school has also drawn up an action plan based on all the issues, no matter how slight, arising from the last inspection and has kept progress under close review, bringing in consultants to help and advise, when necessary. The senior management and the governors have very clear ideas of what needs to be done to improve further. Their plans include applying for Arts College status, completing the school's registration for recognition by 'Investors in People', extending information and communications technology across the curriculum and undertaking more work to develop a wider repertoire of teaching strategies and to encourage more independent learning and supported self-study amongst the students.

59. The school has thorough arrangements for the systematic identification of issues and the review of progress towards the targets set through a network of inter-connected meetings. These include annual departmental reviews and regular meetings of the senior consultative committee, which widely represents the school's middle and junior management, and of the policy group and the senior management team. In these ways, major objectives, as well as the other targets set in the school's development plan, are carefully chosen to reflect the school's current needs. The governors are kept very well

informed of the school's needs and the progress it is making and they are fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Many of them visit the school regularly and are linked to different teaching departments. They play an active and often a central part in reviewing progress and in taking forward developments. For example, they have steered a prudent path through the difficulties inherent in the school's change from Grant Maintained to Foundation status and they formed a limited company to oversee the funding and the completion of the capital building programme. The governing body generally meets once a term and the main committees meet twice a term. Minutes are clear and show that the meetings are well attended and businesslike.

60. The head and the senior managers, including the members of the policy group, have established good arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching. Over the past two years, a rolling programme of lesson observations has covered the work of all the departments except the physical education and technology departments. These have been deliberately left until the refurbishment of their accommodation is completed. Observations are recorded on standard pro-forma and are analysed and discussed with the individual teachers and with the departmental staff together. The head keeps a detailed record of all the observations and of the subsequent meetings and this information is used to guide the professional development of individual teachers and the development of a wider range of teaching styles in the departments. Some departmental heads have had the opportunity to monitor teaching in their departments and, on occasions, they have been partnered in this activity by a consultant from the local education authority. There is a growing willingness to share good practice between departments and this trend is very constructive. The quality of teaching in the school and the rising standards of attainment testify to the effectiveness of these arrangements.

61. The school's financial planning very effectively links planned expenditure to educational priorities. Each year, consultations and reviews are held which refer back to the previous year's targets and new targets are set and costed. Expenditure is closely monitored by the school's finance and administration officer who produces very detailed monthly statements for the head and the members of the governors' finance committee. These are then carefully scrutinised. Patterns of expenditure are also reviewed and analysed by the senior management team and the policy group. The accounts are audited annually and the last report was complimentary about the school's procedures and made no critical comments. Specific grants, including those for staff development and those for students with special educational needs, are appropriately spent and the school rigorously applies the principles of best value.

62. The transition from Grant Maintained to Foundation status resulted in the school incurring an unforeseeable overspend, owing in part, to differences in the calculations made by national and local bodies. As a result, the school now has a licensed deficit of £27,000 and it has reduced expenditure significantly. Income and expenditure rates per student are low compared with similar schools nationally and expenditure on teachers is also low. Consequently, the amount of non-teaching time available has been considerably reduced. The amount of money available for renewing resources for learning is little more than it was in 1994. The sixth form is run economically and pays for itself. Despite these measures, the school still has to face the possibility of a redundancy in senior management if it is to avoid a rolling deficit of up to £40,000 a year.

63. The teaching and non-teaching staff share the school's aims and values and work hard to ensure that they are reflected in its day-to-day life. This is particularly evident, not only in the students' high attainment and in their other achievements, but also in the quality of relationships at all levels in the school and the degree of consideration shown by the

students to others. Staff fully support the drive to raise standards but the school's capacity for improvement is limited by the shortage of resources.

64. The heads of department and the heads of year are very hard-working and committed to the school's success. However, their effectiveness in some areas is limited by the amount of time they have to carry out their management functions, particularly monitoring teaching in their departments and helping to develop the programme of personal and social education. The school already has a reduced capacity for allocating non-teaching time but this scarce resource is not always allocated in the most efficient way. The school needs to review the allocation of non-teaching time to all senior staff and to weigh this against the deployment of responsibilities, with a view to making the best possible use of non-teaching time. The management of the science department is unsatisfactory and the school is not employing new technology effectively to support its management systems.

65. The co-ordinator of provision for students with special educational needs works hard and efficiently. However, she is swamped with paperwork. She has to deal with three different education authorities and the funding is controlled through a very demanding and time-consuming system. Furthermore, she has limited access to the school's administrative computer system and does the work on her own computer at home. The office time allocated to her is not sufficiently flexible to fit in with pattern of the administrative work required. This means that she cannot cover the full range of duties normally tackled by co-ordinators of provision for special educational needs. The heads of year cover the behavioural aspects of the individual education plans very effectively but have no time to cope with all the elements of academic monitoring.

66. After the last inspection, the school initiated a programme of research and training to raise teachers' awareness of different teaching approaches appropriate for boys and girls. It was found that, although boys demanded and received more of the teachers' attention, the progress of girls was not affected significantly. Work has taken place to raise the achievement of boys and the gap between the attainment of boys and girls has been considerably narrowed. The school monitors results by gender and heads of year monitor option choices in order to create the best possible distribution of gender between groups. There is a good balance of gender amongst the senior and middle managers, providing good role-models for students. Several areas of the curriculum highlight the need for equality and fairness. The school has developed strategies for learning about and dealing with bullying and students are encouraged to report any incidents that they see. The school uses trust funds to provide additional financial support for students who might otherwise be financially disadvantaged.

67. All students have equal access to the curriculum and a special educational needs policy has been drawn up since the last inspection. Departments are encouraged to develop materials and to provide tasks that support and extend students' learning according to their ability. Improvements to the accommodation, in particular the creation of ramps, have resulted in most of the school being accessible to disabled students despite the difficulties inherent in the steeply sloping site. The new fitness centre is important in this respect and its availability for these students at specific times provides them with good opportunities. Well-established links with a local special school encourage interaction and enable students to develop an understanding of the needs of the disabled.

68. There are enough teaching staff to meet overall curriculum needs. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced although, in some subjects, this experience is limited to teaching in only one school. There are adequate support staff to cover the needs

in most subjects, except food technology and art, where there are no technicians and the range of teaching and learning opportunities available in some lessons is correspondingly reduced. The in-service training provided is of generally good quality and the school monitors the quality of courses attended by teachers. Teaching departments evaluate the effects of staff development on teaching and learning but further action to extend these is not always taken. Formal procedures for staff appraisal and review are very effectively implemented for all teaching and non-teaching staff with the exception of two teachers who have been withdrawn from the scheme on the recommendation of an external organisation. There are satisfactory procedures for the induction of newly-qualified teachers, which meet national requirements, and for the induction of teachers who are new to the school. There is a well-organised and largely effective partnership between the school and Exeter University School of Education for the provision of Initial Teacher Training and most departments in the school have been involved in the scheme in recent years. The quality of the arrangements is formally evaluated and the student teachers consider it to be very good.

69. Overall, the standard of accommodation is good and it meets the needs of all the teaching departments except geography. Accommodation is much improved since the last inspection, when it was deemed to be poor. The sale of its boarding houses has allowed the school to undertake an extensive capital building programme. As a result, the school has recently built a sports hall and fitness suite with associated classroom and changing facilities, a drama and media studio and toilets and facilities for changing and first aid on the playing field. Additionally, the school has extended the art and design area, remodelled and refurbished the design and technology rooms and refurbished three laboratories. Facilities for information and communications technology have also been much extended and improved. Facilities for disabled students have improved, with more ramps and rails and a new lift system has been installed in the drama studio. Displays celebrating students' achievements are now very evident in all areas of the school. The administrative staff are now well accommodated and the deputy headteachers have their own offices. A general refurbishment programme allows for the replacement of window blinds and carpets.

70. Most departments have their teaching rooms grouped in suites and benefit from the positive effect this has on departmental organisation. However, geography is taught in unsatisfactory, huddled accommodation where the heating is inadequate and there is little room for display. The lack of carpets in the modern language rooms makes the acoustic difficult and although storage space has been improved in most areas, there is still a shortage in the history area. Unfinished building work is affecting the use of teaching areas for design and technology and the outdoor hard court areas have suffered badly from the building works and need urgent attention. Accommodation is managed well and the governors' premises committee monitors this effectively. The buildings are cleaned adequately.

71. There have been improvements in resources for most subjects since the last inspection, particularly in physical education, where they are now good. The equipment in the new sports hall and the fitness suite is excellent. Resources for history are very good. In spite of significant improvements in information and communications technology and some improvements in music and design and technology, resources in these subjects remain unsatisfactory. In other subjects, the level of resources is adequate for teaching the National Curriculum but some equipment, especially in science, is nearing the end of its useful life. Classes in some subjects, particularly English, history, religious education and geography, have insufficient access to computers. Very limited budgets affect music and limit fieldwork in geography.

72. The library stock has increased since the last inspection. The number of books is still slightly less than that recommended nationally but all are relatively up-to-date and most are in good condition. New software has recently been installed to catalogue the library stock and students in Years 7 and 8 are taught how to use these facilities. There is only a limited number of computers with Internet links. The use of the library is satisfactory and it is well used at lunchtime and at other times by sixth form students. After-school use is not extensive because many students have to catch buses home. Access to the library has been improved since the last inspection by the appointment of a part-time assistant.

73. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in almost all respects and, within its present financial constraints, it is well placed to maintain this improvement. It has successfully raised attainment in external examinations and its students achieve many successes in a wide range of other activities. The quality of the teaching is very good and students consequently make good progress. Taking these factors into account and balancing them against the socio-economic background of most of the students and their attainments on entry, the school is giving good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

74. In order to maintain the existing good rate of progress and high standards, the school's senior management and the governors need to:

- (1) Improve the management of the science department, ensuring that all aspects of the National Curriculum are covered and that the options offered to students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are realistic and effectively taught.
(See paragraphs 51, 64, 99, 100, 101)
- (2) Speed arrangements for installing a network of computers throughout the school for academic, administrative and managerial purposes.
(See paragraphs 64, 72, 81, 93, 99, 110, 120, 128, 132)
- (3) Ensure that the policies for teaching literacy and information and communications technology across the curriculum are properly implemented and monitored.
(See paragraphs 64, 72, 81, 93, 99, 110, 120, 128, 132)
- (4) Re-allocate the scarce non-teaching time available for managers so that it matches their responsibilities in a more equitable way.
(See paragraph 64)
- (5) Complete the formalisation of procedures for health and safety and ensure that they are rigorously implemented.
(See paragraphs 44, 114)

75. In addition to the key issues set out above, the school should also consider ways of ensuring the coverage of religious education for all age groups, including the sixth form, and providing a daily act of collective worship. (See paragraphs 57, 164, 165)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	171
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.8	28.3	47.6	20.5	1.8	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	720	146
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	51	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	272	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.2

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	88	68	156

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	72	66
	Girls	61	53	45
	Total	123	125	111
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (79)	80 (73)	70 (74)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (42)	44 (43)	36 (29)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	64	68
	Girls	43	52	56
	Total	94	116	124
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (48)	75 (70)	79 (48)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (24)	41 (40)	40 (20)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	57	78	135

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	31	52	52
	Girls	49	76	76
	Total	80	128	128
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	59 (47)	95 (99)	95 (99)
	National	48 (46)	88 (87)	94 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41 (40)
	National	37.8 (36.9)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	30	33	63

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	18.4	17.9	18.2 (16)	1.8	2.8	2.1 (1.6)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (16.5)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.7)

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

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	861
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	49	0
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)	48.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	325

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	22.9

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2,162,981.00
Total expenditure	2,160,335.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,536.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	47,438.00
Balance carried forward to next year	50,084.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	866
Number of questionnaires returned	275

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	55	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	56	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	63	4	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	56	16	2	3
The teaching is good.	28	65	4	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	55	11	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	42	6	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	48	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	52	15	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	33	53	7	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	56	3	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	42	5	0	2

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

ENGLISH

76. In 1999, students' attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Results were better than those achieved by students in science and similar to those achieved in mathematics. Standards of attainment have improved in recent years. The proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A* to C in English in 1999 was well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Attainment in English literature was not quite so high but was still above the national average. Overall, students attained higher levels in English than they did in science but grades were lower than they were in mathematics. In the last two years, standards in English have improved markedly. Results in English literature vary from year to year, depending on whether students choose to study literature or media studies. At both key stages, girls attain higher standards than boys but the difference is less than in most schools. The proportions of students who obtained the highest grades in the GCE A level examinations were below the national averages in 1998 and 1999 although nearly all students achieved passes.

77. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm these levels of attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4. Students in Year 13 now achieve standards which are above the national average. Students arrive in school with above average attainment in English in Year 7 and make good progress during Key Stage 3. In Year 9, nearly all students express their views clearly and confidently. Many use Standard English fluently, for example when explaining their ideas about people's experiences in wartime after studying the paintings of Nevinson. Most read aloud with confidence and good expression. They also read widely and make the most of opportunities to read books of their choice in class at the beginning of lessons. However, they have insufficient opportunity to discuss their books with each other. Some students find the language of Shakespeare difficult but even lower-attaining students understand the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* well. They develop a good understanding of the relationships between the characters and can produce evidence from the text to back up their opinions. Most students make good use of drafting books to improve their writing so that the final presentation of their work is usually neat and accurate. Many write effectively in a range of styles. For example, they produce newspaper reports and narrative accounts of the sinking of the Titanic. Higher-attaining students are able to integrate correctly punctuated direct speech in their narrative writing.

78. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards remain well above the expected levels. Speaking and listening skills are very well developed. Even the lowest-attaining students are able to express their views confidently. For example, they held a good discussion about the morality of a person's dialect influencing career opportunities, in response to Tom Leonard's poem *Unrelated Incidents*. They continue to read widely although there are not enough opportunities for them to discuss their personal reading at this key stage, either. Most make very good reference to the text when responding to plays and novels and many develop good analytical skills, giving individual, personal responses to plays such as *Macbeth* and *The Crucible*, by Arthur Miller. A few students in the lowest set have difficulty in writing at length but most students have developed good writing skills and they spell and punctuate their work accurately. They continue to use draft books effectively, especially for note-taking during lessons. Students in middle and higher sets have an easy command of a range of writing styles and there are some talented poets. For example, one student's poem, written in the style of Carol Ann Duffy, presented an imaginative, sensitive description of her inspirational primary school teacher.

79. Students with a wide range of attainment enter the sixth form to study English literature. In the present Year 13, standards are above the expected level. Many students contribute to lively debates about set texts although a few are very quiet and lack confidence when speaking formally to the rest of the class. Many are able to provide alternative interpretations for the meaning of complex texts. For example, half of the class wrote very good, analytical essays about the relevance and meaning of the title of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. They can explain allusions to concepts such as courtly love in literature, contrasting it with the more earthy variety portrayed in sections of Chaucer's *The Merchant's Tale*. Students with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Students of all ages have very positive attitudes to learning. They are attentive and keen to contribute to lessons. They collaborate well in pairs and groups and their relationships with teachers are excellent.

80. Overall, teaching is good and it is nearly always satisfactory or better. It was very good in a quarter of the lessons seen. Teachers' very good knowledge of the set texts enables them to provide students with a depth of understanding. For example, in two sixth form lessons, students' understanding of *The Merchant's Tale* and *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* was enriched through the teachers' knowledge of classicists and of Greek and Roman mythology. Teachers make very good use of homework to help students prepare for lessons as well as to complete work. They manage classes well by building on the excellent relationships they establish with students. In the best lessons, teachers plan a good variety of motivating activities so that students maintain their concentration very well. Students in one Year 11 class developed their understanding of the techniques of persuasive writing because the teacher encouraged them to use these skills in role-play and then invited them to identify the same techniques in Mark Anthony's famous speech in *Julius Caesar*. However, in a few lessons, teachers talk to the class for too long. Most teachers mark written work very comprehensively so that students know what they need to do to improve. Occasionally, they do not provide sufficient advice to higher-attaining students through their marking. They praise the work but do not identify specific strengths or comparative weaknesses. Teaching is not quite so good in basic literacy lessons at Key Stage 3 as it lacks sufficient challenge and pace. Literacy skills are often taught in isolation, so that students do not make links with other work that they are doing in English.

81. The English department has made very good improvements since the last inspection. Improvements in teaching have led to higher standards of attainment at all key stages. Teachers have re-written schemes of work, identifying clear learning objectives, so that students know the purpose of the work they are being asked to do. The department now has a clear writing policy and this has led to improvements in the standards of students' written work although the spelling policy is not always followed. The book stock has been suitably up-dated and recommended reading lists have been reviewed. Teachers attempt to use information and communications technology when possible but there are still insufficient opportunities for students to use computers in their work. The department is just beginning to keep records of students' progress over time. The head of department provides very good leadership and teachers work well together as a team. However, she is allocated insufficient management time to monitor teaching or to carry out other objectives in the department's development plan effectively.

Drama

82. All students are taught drama at Key Stage 3. They can choose to follow a GCSE drama course at Key Stage 4 and a small number of students are studying theatre studies at GCE A level. Students at the end of Key Stage 3 achieve good standards. Most have good listening skills and articulate clearly when speaking. Higher-attaining students can produce work of a very high standard. For example, they enthralled their audience with a powerful representation of the reaction of black South African parents to racist legislation. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students attaining grades A* to C is well above the national average every year. In observed lessons, students in Year 11 showed well-developed skills in planning and evaluating group improvisations. They are able to plan for and analyse levels of comedy, tension, pace and visual action in their performances. In Year 13, students are able to make a personal response to Wertebaker's *Our Country's Good*. They understand the Brechtian elements in the play and make confident suggestions about the different ways in which sections of the play might be interpreted and directed.

83. Drama is well taught and the quality of teaching in one lesson in the sixth form was very good. Lessons are well planned. Teachers show an impressive awareness of the needs of individual students and plan lessons to ensure that all can participate at their own level. In the sixth form, incisive questioning helped students to build on their knowledge of the play and to produce their personal responses.

84. Since the previous inspection, drama has been introduced for all students at Key Stage 3 and it is now an option in the sixth form. This expansion has happened rapidly and there are problems with staffing at Key Stage 3, where job-sharing arrangements mean that teachers have to share several classes. The head of drama has developed coherent schemes of work for each year and is trialling a detailed assessment system. This is a very heavy workload to carry without a second in department and a lack of time is limiting further developments.

Literacy across the curriculum

85. Standards of literacy are good in all subjects although there are inevitably some lower-attaining students who have difficulty reading and spelling new technical terms. Most students read aloud fluently in all subjects when given the opportunity and writing skills are generally well developed. In geography, many students in Year 8 write extended sentences and use paragraphs appropriately, and students in a lower band group gave good oral answers in standard English when asked to identify ideal locations for steel works. Opportunities vary for students to develop their speaking and listening skills through discussion and debate in other subjects. In physical education, for example, students have lively debates about issues such as amateurism, professionalism and sponsorship in sport. However, in history and religious education, students rarely have opportunities for full discussions. Teachers in all departments are aware of the need to develop a policy for literacy across the curriculum, but this is at an early stage. In the geography department, some students are provided with writing frames to help them record their experiences on educational visits. In other departments, such as science and music, there is insufficient use of word banks or keywords to ensure that all students develop the required technical vocabulary.

MATHEMATICS

86. In 1999, the proportion of students attaining the expected level in the standard tests and assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 was well above the national average and the proportion reaching higher levels was above the national average. These outcomes were similar to those for 1998 and were well above those achieved by schools with a similar intake. However, the proportion reaching the higher levels was below the average for similar schools. The percentage of students gaining grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was significantly better than the national average and the results in 1998 were similar. At both key stages, there was little difference between the attainments of boys and girls and results were near the average for all subjects in the school. In 1999, more than one student in every four obtained grades A to B in the A level examinations, which was better than the result in 1998. It is not appropriate to compare this result with national figures as the number of candidates was so small.

87. The attainment of students entering the school in Year 7 is slightly above the national average, with fewer of the highest attainers and a greater proportion of the middle range than is seen in the overall national profile. The very good examination and test results are thus very pleasing and show that the department enables students to make generally good progress in the subject across both key stages and very good progress in the sixth form. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work confirm that students of all ages are working at above the nationally expected levels.

88. Standards of numeracy are generally good on entry to the school although a small but significant fraction of students do not have secure knowledge of their tables and number bonds. The mathematics department is trying to raise these basic standards by regularly exercising mental skills in almost all lessons. Mathematical skills are reinforced effectively in several areas of the curriculum. For instance, graphs and calculations are used appropriately and effectively in science and geography. Accurate measurement, including weighing, is required in design and technology, data analysis is carried out efficiently in physical education and good use is made of space and shape in art. Particularly effective use of data-handling skills is made in the vocational courses in the sixth form. Likewise, in A level geography, students confidently use advanced statistical tests.

89. Sixth form classes achieve very good standards. Particularly high levels were seen in a Year 13 lesson revising differentiation of implicit functions. Some students handled complex trigonometric functions with some confidence. Students develop powers of analysis in class which enable them to apply techniques to complex situations. In another Year 13 statistics class the students successfully applied their understanding of statistical hypothesis testing.

90. At both key stages and in the sixth form, students make good progress generally. They make particularly good progress and learn well when teaching is stimulating. Students generally enjoy learning and using mathematics in practical situations. A higher-attaining Year 8 class investigating 'Three Stairs' number relationships discovered algebraic models successfully by trial and error methods. Year 11 students made good progress in their understanding of the measures of central tendency by applying their understanding to several different practical situations. Year 13 students were seen to make very good progress when they effectively applied their understanding of centres of gravity to calculations for composite laminae. Those with special educational needs make good progress. The limited number who have numeracy specifically identified as a target in their

individual education plans achieve appropriately. Students are encouraged to use calculators sensibly. This is good practice, given the need to develop mental skills. Information and communications technology is used to a very limited extent in mathematics lessons, although one very good lesson was seen where an upper set in Year 11 used computers to learn very effectively about transformations of graphical functions.

91. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department and teachers generally have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. All the teaching seen was good or better and it was very good in half of the lessons observed, particularly in the sixth form. The general ethos in the classroom is positive. Students are expected to work hard and do their best. It is assumed that good behaviour is the norm. The staff have good relationships with their students and consequently achieve apparently effortless control. They plan and pace their lessons very well and generally vary activities well to maintain interest. For example, a successful lesson was observed with a group in Year 8 containing a significant proportion of students with special educational needs. The teacher kept every student occupied throughout the lesson with good changes of activity and maintained their interest by introducing an element of fun into the proceedings. Assessment is very well used in both the short and long term to plan future learning, particularly in the sixth form. Students know where they are and how they are doing. Teachers use resources effectively but more use could be made of the real world as a general resource. They use homework effectively to complement class learning. Students love using real data and analysing real-life situations. Teaching in the sixth form is a particular strength. The tutorial style is very effective with students who generally love the challenge of the subject. Teachers give very freely of their time to help their students and this contributes greatly to the successful teaching in the department.

92. Students generally enjoy their mathematics lessons and participate enthusiastically in question and answer sessions. They enjoy working with partners using real life data in investigations and they generally keep their attention going for the whole sixty minutes of lessons. Students are invariably well behaved and well motivated. They enjoy the subject and like to show off their knowledge and understanding of its operations and its terminology.

93. The subject is well led by a very caring, dedicated and hard-working professional who leads from the front. His team are likewise dedicated to the cause of maximising the attainment of all students. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress. Better assessment procedures have been introduced and accommodation is now arranged in a suite of classrooms. The efforts to raise standards of numeracy are also good practice. The department now needs to develop its use of information and communications technology although access to the school's main facilities is limited.

SCIENCE

94. In 1999, the proportions of 14 year olds who reached the nationally expected level and the higher levels in the National Curriculum tests and assessments were well above the national averages. Results were also higher than those obtained by schools with a similar intake of students. These high levels of attainment have been maintained over the last four years and there was an improvement between 1998 and 1999, when the national standards fell slightly. Boys and girls exceed their respective national standards at the end of the key stage, with boys doing slightly better than girls. This good achievement was confirmed by the lessons observed. Students in a high set in Year 9 were able to prepare slides showing root hairs, examine them with skilful use of microscopes and relate the observations to their theoretical knowledge of plant physiology. As part of a revision

lesson, lower-attaining students in Year 8 prepared short talks for the class on different sorts of chemical reactions. Students were able to use technical terminology properly to give simple but correct accounts of these reactions and of neutralisation and similar topics.

95. The proportion of students who obtained grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was slightly above the national average, as was the average point score overall, which reflects the attainment of all students. However, the performance was below that of similar schools. Comparison of attainment over time is complicated by the recent change in policy, whereby all students took double science in 1999, rather than some taking separate sciences. However, the proportion of students gaining at least two of the higher grades was nearly 10 per cent higher than in any of the previous five years. Overall, there is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 4 but boys gain a slightly higher proportion of higher grades. Observation of lessons indicated that this good level of achievement is likely to be maintained. For example, students in the top set of Year 10 successfully tackled a test on the nervous system. All were able to provide answers that would merit at least a grade C and over half the class were comfortably above this level. Students in the second set in Year 11, revising the reactivity series, were able to understand the relationship between acidic and basic oxides and the positions of metals and non-metals in the periodic table of elements.

96. The results of the relatively small number of students taking A level science subjects are consistently below the national averages but represent satisfactory achievement when compared to expectations based on their attainment at GCSE. Observation of lessons presented a similar picture in the present A level groups. Some students, building on high attainment at Key Stage 4, are in line for good grades at A level but most are finding work at this level difficult and work hard to achieve pass grades. For example, students in the Year 13 chemistry class were struggling to relate the conductivity of metals to their electronic configuration. Attainment in the Year 13 physics class practising examination calculations ranged from answers at grade B level to others just above the pass grade.

97. Teaching is always satisfactory and it is often good. The bulk of the good teaching and the only example of very good teaching occurred at Key Stage 3. Teaching is firmly based in a good command of the subject and the very effective management of students. When practical work is undertaken, it is well organised, relationships with students are always constructive and, at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, relationships are good and help to motivate students to greater effort. In typically satisfactory lessons, this is not always the case. For example, the top set in Year 11 watched a video-recording about photosynthesis and the teacher then recapitulated the content and asked factual questions of the whole class. Throughout the lesson, the students behaved very well, some volunteered answers to questions and all did the work required of them. Whilst all clearly benefited from this work, there was little evidence of the students taking a great interest in the lesson or of them reaching higher levels of understanding or being motivated to greater efforts. A higher proportion of the lessons at Key Stage 3 include practical work that students find challenging and interesting. A higher set in Year 9 were asked to establish for themselves the law of turning forces by experimental investigation. Working at varying speeds, the students quickly spotted the need to combine the size of the force operating and its distance from the pivot. By the end of the lesson, all could state confidently how to calculate the turning effect of a force, they understood the phenomenon and had thoroughly enjoyed the lesson.

98. Weaknesses in teaching include unsatisfactory planning which fails to establish clear learning objectives or acknowledge the differing abilities of students in each group. Consequently, these lessons do not offer interesting and varied learning experiences.

Teaching, particularly at Key Stage 4, is too often viewed as a process that simply imparts the same factual information simultaneously to the whole class, using restricted strategies. Teachers give long explanations, sometimes illustrated by practical demonstration, rather than ask students to experiment and make discoveries for themselves. The most successful approaches, which use questioning to build understanding and to encourage students to work things out for themselves and present their work in the form of experimental investigation, are underused. The lower attainment and the lack of enthusiasm for science at Key Stage 4 are mainly due to the fact that many lessons at that key stage are boring. When students are allowed to work at different speeds and in different ways to solve problems and do experimental work, they respond with great enthusiasm and learn effectively. All students show very positive and mature attitudes to practical work, working safely and taking great care with equipment.

99. The teaching of basic skills within the science curriculum is unsatisfactory. Most students have adequate skills in numeracy to cope with the mathematical problems met in science but teachers do not adopt a standardised approach to methods of calculation. For example, a class in Year 8 were required to work out a fraction which included decimal calculation beyond the level which most had achieved in their mathematics education. A small but significant number of students have poor literacy skills that make the learning of technical terminology particularly difficult. Few of the science teachers are sufficiently skilled in helping students to overcome this problem. Some work is done with modern computer technology but this is mostly confined to A level students and those in the top sets. Lack of equipment and difficulties in gaining access to the school's computers account in part for this shortfall but teachers' lack of skills and confidence with computers are also factors, in some cases.

100. The management of science is unsatisfactory. Over time, many of the science teachers have acquired major responsibilities for aspects of the school's work outside the department but this is not the main cause of the shortcomings. Weakness in management is most evident in the arrangements for the assessment of students' progress and attainment. Some teachers are unfamiliar with the levels of attainment defined in the National Curriculum and are therefore unable to assess standards accurately. Day-to-day marking of students' work is inconsistent. Some teachers mark carefully, using the agreed system, while others do little more than give occasional ticks and some of their written comments are illegible. There is no system for collating information on the attainment and progress of individuals or of groups of students although the results of the recent GCSE examinations have been used to identify weaker areas of teaching. However, until the department has a proper data-base, teachers will be unable to set realistic targets or evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. The absence of such arrangements is a key cause of the failure to maintain the good standards achieved at Key Stage 3. Lack of effective leadership is compounded by the apparent unwillingness of some teachers to accept responsibility for their own professional standards or to keep abreast of developments in scientific education.

101. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in some areas. The accommodation has been radically improved and the department now has enough laboratories of good quality and associated preparation rooms. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has improved. There has been a major investment in textbooks and, although there is still not enough computer equipment, the department is in general adequately resourced. The major changes in curriculum recommended in the last report have been undertaken and are beginning to bear fruit. Teachers, using a commercially produced course, now take responsibility for all the science teaching of classes at Key Stage 3 rather than only teaching within their own narrow science specialism. This is giving students a

more coherent experience of science and is enabling teachers to know and understand individual students much better. However, the other aspects criticised, including assessment, the lack of complete schemes of work for all key stages, the failure to integrate practical investigations into the syllabus, a limited range of teaching methods and insufficient recognition of students' varying abilities in the planning of lessons are all still in need of much improvement. All these weaknesses are identified in the department's development plan but this document fails to identify the practical strategies, allocate responsibility clearly or to set precise deadlines. It does not, therefore, provide an effective basis for improvement.

ART

102. In evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in art, account has been taken of the fact that, at the time of the inspection, a full-time member of staff in the department had been frequently absent on grounds of ill health. His classes had sometimes been taught by non-specialist supply teachers. Furthermore, the work of the department had been disrupted for several months by the building and refurbishment work going on in some of the rooms. The overall judgements strike a balance between good work in many instances where there has been little disruption and less satisfactory work where there has been turbulence.

103. In 1999, teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 showed attainment to be broadly in line with nationally expected standards, with little difference between the attainments of boys and girls. The proportions of A* to C and A* to G grades gained in the 1999 GCSE examinations were well above the national averages. Boys' results were well above those of boys nationally but not as high as those of the girls. The percentage of A* to C grades has shown a steady rise since 1996. Performance indicators show that students perform better in art than in half their other subjects. Results in the 1999 A level examinations were above the national average, with four out of six students obtaining A or B grades. The two candidates entered for the advanced GNVQ course gained distinctions. These excellent results are similar to those of the past few years but, because the numbers are small, national comparisons based on percentages need careful interpretation.

104. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was broadly in line with national standards. Students perform at the expected levels in painting and drawing and in three-dimensional modelling and have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of artists and styles, such as Renaissance art or the work of Kandinsky. Sketchbooks show satisfactory productivity, particularly in observational drawing and the use of colour. Students often show good imagination in their paintings, such as those they devised for a project on heaven and hell.

105. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment is above the expected level at the end of Key Stage 4. Students who have opted to follow the GCSE art course are highly motivated and, because of this and the high quality of most teaching in the department, including some recent very good specialist supply teaching, the effects of turbulence have been less severe. Students have good control of media, such as oil pastel, to produce images which often show a well-developed sense of form and composition. Their drawings, paintings and clay models are often imaginative and of a good standard. Students are knowledgeable about the work of well-known artists, such as Caravaggio. They have good research skills and many make use of information and communications technology to obtain information from external sources, such as the Warhol Museum.

106. During the inspection, attainment at A level was seen to be above average. Painting and drawing skills are well advanced and students' research is thorough. Coursework shows substantial productivity of high quality. Students' work produced for the final examination, often of three-dimensional mixed-media artefacts, shows a high level of originality and sensitivity in concept. For example, one student produced a piece about the hypocrisy of religion in wars which was full of very strong imagery and another created a design and mock-up for a large welded wire sculpture. Attainment on the advanced GNVQ course is also above average. Folios contain large quantities of very good work with a meticulous, virtually professional, degree of finish. Students make very effective use of information and communications technology to create interesting colour mixes or to make enlargements of posters, covers for compact discs or box designs. Their portfolios also contain some very good design ideas and well executed models.

107. The quality of learning is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. All students, including those with special educational needs, acquire better than expected knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject. Bearing in mind the difficulties the department has experienced, this is greatly to the credit of staff and students. Students in Year 7, for example, quickly learn how to apply paint without too much water when painting face-masks and also develop their drawing, planning and organising skills to produce very good fantastic portraits. Such good learning, progress and productivity are possible because of the generally very good behaviour which prevails in the art department and the currently very good quality of the teaching there.

108. The standards of achievement in all age groups reflect the very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development which students of all ages display. Stimulating teaching enables them to find the subject enjoyable and interesting and many of them opt to do it for the GCSE examinations. Students sustain their concentration well and, as they move up the school, they show an increasingly good capacity for personal study in the forms of research, preparation and homework. Relationships between teachers and students and amongst students themselves are very good.

109. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and plan very effectively. The quality and use of on-going assessment are very good. Teachers' expectations and their management of students are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching of a very high quality in an outstanding life-drawing class in Year 12 encouraged each student to observe closely and measure rigorously and to produce very good studies in almost every case. The department is well led and schemes of work and documentation are very good. Visits to galleries in London and, occasionally, to others in Barcelona and New York demonstrate the commitment of teachers in this dynamic department and add significantly to the depth of experience of students here.

110. The last report offered some criticisms of teaching where, for example, it appeared to be over-directive or insufficiently prepared. There was no evidence of these weaknesses on this inspection. On the contrary, students are constantly involved in decision-making and reviewing their work and lessons are scrupulously well prepared. The problems caused by the long-term absence of a full-time member of staff have had some adverse influence on learning and on the attainment of some students but they have also been extremely difficult for the school to resolve. At the time of the last inspection, attainment was in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and significantly above the national averages in the GCSE examinations and in the sixth form. The fact that these high standards have been maintained represents good progress since the last inspection.

There have also been significant improvements in the accommodation. Although some good use is made of information and communications technology in art, there is scope for greatly expanding skills and provision in this area.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

111. In 1999, teachers' assessments showed that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was in line with the nationally expected level. All students at Key Stage 3 fully cover the programmes of study set out in the National Curriculum. The current Year 9 has made good progress and their attainment overall is above the expected levels. Standards in design skills are satisfactory but practical work standards are well above national expectations. The school needs to provide access to more up-to-date computer equipment, linked to the Internet, and to set up display areas in order to raise standards further. Progress has been made in Key Stage 4 attainment since the last inspection, building upon a good start. Since 1996, results in the GCSE examinations for design and technology have been improving and they are consistently better than those achieved nationally. In 1999, 69 per cent of those taking the examinations obtained grades A* to C. In lessons observed at Key Stage 4, students' skills in designing and making products were above expected levels, confirming the standards achieved in examinations over recent years. There is no noticeable difference between the attainments of boys and girls. The standard of work seen in the sixth form was at the expected level.

112. Progress is generally good across and within key stages and all students are keen to do well. Progress is aided by the teachers' encouragement, their purposeful interventions and their good relationships with students. Staff in the department work well together as a team. Explanations and demonstrations are pitched at levels which match students' levels of understanding. Good progress is made where students are stimulated to evaluate and review their work and teachers reinforce their learning. Progress is assisted by the good use of questions to help consolidate learning. Students are encouraged to explain where and why their work has been successful or unsuccessful and how they will follow it up. However, they have few opportunities for conducting self-supported research.

113. Students of all ages display good attitudes to learning. They arrive punctually for lessons and they are keen to participate in and complete their practical work. The teaching of design and technology is good throughout the school and sometimes very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject, their expectations of students and the effectiveness of their teaching methods are very good. Consequently, students display high levels of interest and concentrate very well in lessons. They enjoy the subject and have very good relationships with the teaching staff. They often want to do extra work at lunchtimes and after school and the teaching staff support this. Most students show responsibility for themselves and others, particularly when they were working with tools and materials. They work well together, often helping one another, and they maintain a safe working environment. Many lessons are punctuated by good discussions between teachers and students and judicious advice, support and evaluative comment are often given. Teachers allow the students sufficient time to wrestle with problems and they time their interventions skilfully to avoid frustration and advance learning without inhibiting the students' creativity. Teachers maintain good pace in lessons by providing individual advice and help. The assessment and marking of assignments are satisfactory. The school fully complies with the requirements of the National Curriculum by providing compulsory design and technology at Key Stages 3 and 4.

114. Consolidation and progress have taken place since the last inspection. Standards of achievement remain above national expectations and have been improving further, and management of the department and the quality of team work remain strengths of the department. Technician support has not, however, been extended to the food technology areas as recommended in the last report. Departmental planning and organisation are good. Accommodation is satisfactory, albeit sometimes crowded, but some of the workshops need decoration and refitting to encourage high quality presentation skills. Class sizes are satisfactory at present but the department needs to monitor closely the number of students that can be safely and effectively accommodated in some workshop areas. Safety in the workshops is an issue. The present extractor system is not working correctly and a number of machines are not securely fixed to the floor. At present, there are a number of unsafe working areas and a lack of essential safety equipment.

GEOGRAPHY

115. Teachers' assessments in 1999 showed that the attainment of 14 year olds was below the national average. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations has varied considerably in recent years, from being significantly below the national average for maintained secondary schools to being broadly in line. Over the same period, the performance of girls has usually been above that of boys but the difference has steadily decreased and, in 1999, boys' results were noticeably higher than those of girls. Few students attain the higher grades. When compared with other GCSE subjects in the school, results in geography have usually been below the average although, in 1999, they were close to the average. The proportion of students obtaining A* to G grades has been consistently above the national average in the past few years. Results in the A level examinations have been in line with national averages in the past three years.

116. Evidence from lesson observations and the scrutiny of students' written work indicates that, when supported by good teaching, the coursework of most students at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is at the nationally expected levels for their ages. Progress is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in the rest of the school. By the end of Key Stage 3, students have a sound grounding in geographical skills and vocabulary but they are not always confident with key words. Most can use and interpret maps well but need more practice in the graphical representation and presentation of statistical data. Students have a satisfactory understanding of spatial issues and good knowledge of environmental issues and of the different levels of world development. By the end of Key Stage 4, students can competently explain a range of physical and human processes, such as river and coastal action and they understand urban land-use models. They can also apply a variety of geographical skills to their work. They produce some high-quality project work based on independent study and individual fieldwork. In the sixth form, students generally organise themselves well and develop a good grasp of geographical concepts in a variety of contexts. Students with special educational needs, despite the lack of sufficient learning support, are well served by good supportive teaching and produce satisfactory and often good achievements when measured against their prior attainments.

117. Students have very positive attitudes to learning and most display real interest and enjoyment in their work. Behaviour is always good and usually very good. Students develop very good relationships with their teachers and a real rapport is evident in many lessons, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. They relate very well to each other when working in groups.

118. Teaching is good overall with some very good teaching. It is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and it is satisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers are very committed and supportive, relate positively to students and their classroom management and control are very good. The best teaching has clear and manageable aims which are shared with students and tested at the end of the lesson to ensure that learning has been effective. These qualities, coupled with detailed and imaginative planning, encourage students' interest. As a result, students generally concentrate well and enjoy the variety of learning opportunities offered to them. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and in an enthusiastic, lively and challenging way with high expectation of achievement. In these lessons, staff have a secure knowledge of the subject matter and presentation encourages genuine enjoyment of the subject, thereby promoting learning. Teaching is well structured and focused and a range of good visual teaching aids is used, including extracts of video-recordings and slides of graphs, maps and diagrams. These make it easier to understand the aims of lessons and have a positive impact on the quality of learning.

119. Sometimes, however, teachers do not adequately consolidate or reinforce the main teaching points visually on the board. Not enough use is made of large world maps, to help students gain a greater understanding of geographical place and patterns, or of local maps and real-life examples rather than theoretical models, especially at Key Stage 3. Sometimes, insufficient care is given to selecting materials and activities which match students' abilities and needs. Literacy skills are generally well developed while the development of skills in numeracy is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good elsewhere. The work selected is challenging and pitched at the appropriate level.

120. The results of the GCSE and A level examinations do not fully reflect the quality of teaching or learning observed during the inspection. This is largely due to the lack of a sufficiently rigorous study skills programme, which would improve students' own knowledge of their learning, and of a programme to develop students' skills in examination conditions. Marking is of good quality but students need to be more fully involved in evaluating their own work and setting targets to sustain progress. Fieldwork is effective at all key stages and the best work is of high quality, greatly enriching the quality of learning. Information and communications technology is not effectively used and there is no coherent programme of technology-based skills linked to appropriate topics at Key Stages 3 and 4.

121. The department is well led and managed by an enthusiastic head of department. The quality of this leadership ensures a clear direction for the work and for the development of the department but all other teachers have major responsibilities elsewhere in the school and so they have limited scope to share in management. This, together with the low non-contact time given to the head of department, is holding back some necessary developments. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are thorough and a culture of self-evaluation is being established, with a noticeably positive impact on teaching. Accommodation is in specialist rooms but, despite some upgrading, the temporary classrooms do not provide a satisfactory learning environment. For example, investigatory learning is restricted when classes are large. Resources are adequate but there are some shortages, including a large standing world display map, overhead projection in each specialist teaching room, to aid visual learning, a suitably equipped information and communications technology suite and a fieldwork budget. This good, professionally competent department can improve further by identifying ways of converting the good teaching into more consistent success in national examinations.

122. The previous inspection report identified noticeable weaknesses, particularly relating to standards achieved. Most have been acted upon. Setting has been introduced at Key Stage 4 and teaching time has been increased at Key Stage 3. The need to increase the

pace of learning has been successfully addressed by expanding the taught curriculum, extending the use of resources and setting in Year 9. Tasks are more often matched to students' needs and abilities than in the past but there is much more to do in this area. Marking is now more focused on the objective of the lesson but more still needs to be done to inform students how they can further improve their work.

HISTORY

123. In 1999, standard assessments conducted at the end of Key Stage 3 show students attaining a little below the national average, with girls reaching much higher levels than boys. By the end of Key Stage 4, however, standards are steadily rising, with a pass rate for higher grades in GCSE that is higher than the national average and higher than the average of the school's overall results. Once again, girls perform very much better than boys, the difference being greater than the difference found nationally. At A level, the examination results are above the national average, judging by the points score per student, and about average for the school. There have been no failures since 1994.

124. Standards observed in Key Stage 3 lessons are in line with national expectations. By the end of the key stage, students can organise their work efficiently, understanding the reason why events occurred. The higher-attaining students can give explanations using sources intelligently, writing at length and drawing on a wide vocabulary. They can extract evidence from the textbook and draw sensible conclusions, for example in distinguishing the long- and short-term causes of the French Revolution, while those of lower attainment were succeeding with a similar exercise about the English Civil War.

125. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. Teachers know the subject well and put it over with an enthusiasm which is infectious. All relationships are good, so students enjoy the work and want to do their best. Consequently, the quality of learning is good. Teachers plan lessons meticulously, often bringing in their own possessions to make the subject come alive. In one lesson, the teacher produced an Arab lute to illustrate the culture of the Islamic world and, in another, students were enabled to examine original documents dating from the Civil War. Students also understand that events can be interpreted in different ways, as they did in a lesson on Neville Chamberlain and appeasement. Teachers expect much from students but could select appropriate materials even more sensitively for the lowest attainers. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but need more help in the classroom.

126. Teaching and learning continue to be good at Key Stage 4 and standards of attainment are in line with national expectation and occasionally slightly higher. Teachers give students a great deal of encouragement with local history projects. Studies of the development of Lyme from a port to a resort show industrious research. These projects are beautifully presented with very good use of word-processing, photography and map-making. Some students, at all levels of attainment, show a weakness in chronology and background knowledge. This results, in part at least, from teachers giving students too little opportunity to reflect and discuss. Students are not required to give detailed oral explanations for their opinions or to argue strenuously with each other. However, they work well at investigating sources of evidence, for instance making good use of the Internet to fathom the complexities of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Literacy skills are good but, in some writing, there is too much narrative and too little analysis, a weakness that could be remedied if there were more discussion.

127. Teaching is also good in the sixth form and standards are at or slightly above the levels expected for average pass grades in the A level examinations. Teachers show a

personal interest in their students' progress, giving them the freedom, with guidance, to choose their special assignments and providing them with an unusually wide range of books for further study. As a result, students make good progress. They become deeply involved with their research and write revealingly about the way they have chosen to work. Topics range from Xerxes' invasion of Greece to the Nazis' control of art. Learning is good because teachers have the gift of making complicated issues clear. For example, they help students to grapple with the conflicting accounts of Stalin's rule given by some of those who lived through that period.

128. The previous inspection found much to praise, and the same high standards observed then have been maintained. The department is run with efficiency, commitment and a clear vision of what history can give to young people. It still provides opportunities for very strong moral and social development, not least in the many historical visits arranged for every year group. Above all, teachers use their own knowledge and interests to widen the students' cultural awareness, with many cross-curricular aspects, ranging from religion through to art, music and literature. The previous report criticised the Key Stage 3 curriculum: now new schemes of work have been written, and new methods of assessing them. Students now understand the progress they are making, and what targets to aim for. Although there is much effective use of the Internet and word-processing, students do not have sufficient opportunity to exploit the other uses of information technology, so there is still scope for development there. Otherwise, there has been steady improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

129. Standards of attainment in information and communications technology have been improving at Key Stage 3 over the past three years and, in 1999, teachers' assessments showed that the proportion of 14 year olds who had reached or exceeded the nationally expected levels was above the national average. Students are not entered for external examinations at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form although a limited course in computer literacy is offered at Key Stage 4. Present levels of attainment at Key Stage 3 are always at national expectations and are improving but many students at Key Stage 4 have limited opportunity for the autonomous use of technology in other subjects. Students can use computers to assemble text and symbols to help them communicate ideas in different forms, such as text, tables and pictures. However, most work shows a lack of awareness of audience and students do not compare their use of computers with other methods of recording, processing and communicating information. Standards in the sixth form are satisfactory and most students use the school's facilities to support their work.

130. Overall progress is satisfactory in taught classes, within year groups and from year to year. However, this progress is not sustained in other subjects. This is largely because appropriate targets have not been set for the development of students' skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. In taught lessons, progress is assured by clear explanations and demonstrations pitched at the correct level for the students' current understanding, although tasks are not always well matched to students' needs. Teachers keep students on task by purposeful intervention. Good progress is made where students are stimulated to evaluate, review and build upon their skills and knowledge and teachers reinforce their learning.

131. Students' attitudes, behaviour and motivation in observed lessons were generally good. Students arrive punctually for lessons and are keen to participate. Most show responsibility for themselves and others, particularly when they work together on the computers. Relationships between students and teachers and amongst students

themselves are generally good and students work together extremely well. They generally concentrate well but most are very dependent on their teachers. The development of a capacity for personal study and the ability to solve practical problems in other subjects are limited by a lack of sufficient networked resources around the school. The library resources are good but more software needs to be installed to make full use of the new computers. The school has taken a useful initiative in developing an integrated information system using paper and computers.

132. In the lessons where information and communications technology was taught as a distinct subject, teaching was satisfactory overall and often good. Teachers have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subject, their control and organisation of the class are generally good and lessons are well paced. Teachers have appropriate expectations of students who concentrate on responding with accurate vocabulary and correct technological terms. However, the teaching and use of the technology across the curriculum are not well developed and the senior management team need to ensure that all staff are clear about their individual contributions to, and responsibility for, the operation of the school's policy for the subject. These should be reflected in job descriptions. At the moment, teaching and learning across the curriculum are not sufficiently geared to students' needs or to their prior attainment, including the skills gained from specialist teaching in the subject. The majority of departments are unable to maximise the benefits of this technology due to the limitations of the equipment and the lack of a networked system across the school.

133. Good progress has been made on most fronts since the last inspection. All students at Key Stages 3 and 4 are taught information and communications technology and attainment against national standards is improving. All strands of the present National Curriculum's programme of study are covered. A number of departments are using technology to support learning, although limitations in equipment and in networking restrict what can be achieved. Significant up-grading of equipment has been completed. New machines have been purchased and the library and the business studies area are reasonably well equipped. The school makes good use of its limited facilities but a lot more still needs to be done to extend students' capabilities, knowledge and understanding and to ensure continuity and progression across the curriculum. Leadership at middle management level is now effective.

134. Despite these improvements, further work is required to plan and implement the necessary technical and organisational structures and to modify accommodation so that the whole school may benefit from the new government initiatives and meet the further requirements of the new National Curriculum. The co-ordinator does not have enough time or support to carry out the demands of the post effectively. Planning of individual lessons or sessions in other subjects does not adequately reflect the school's agreed approach to the progressive development and increasing complexity of what needs to be taught. More equipment and common software are needed across the school to extend cross-curricular use and to build upon the training teachers receive through the New Opportunity Fund. The technician has constructive working relationships with staff and students but the need for this support in the classroom will increase as teachers complete their training and use of the new technology increases accordingly.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

135. All students learn French in Year 7. Higher-attaining students also learn German in Years 8 and 9 and can choose to continue with one or both languages in Years 10 and 11. All other students learn French until the end of Year 11.

136. In 1999, teachers' assessments showed that the proportion of fourteen-year-old students who had reached or exceeded the nationally expected levels in speaking, listening, reading and writing French was below the national average. The results of the 1999 GCSE examinations in French were above the national average but those for German were just below national standards. Results overall in modern languages have improved over the past three years. In recent years, A level results in French and German have been slightly above national standards. Evidence gained from observing lessons, scrutinising written work and discussions with students and staff indicates that standards are marginally above national expectations at the ends of both key stages, and in line with expectations in the sixth form.

137. Students generally enjoy the subject and work hard to practise and improve. Consequently, all age groups make good progress. For example, Year 8 French students could write descriptions of a photograph, although they made some basic errors in grammar and spelling. German students in a Year 9 class understood a text about food well enough to complete an exercise where they were required to differentiate between true and false statements and, by the time they reach Year 10, they can say what they ate at different meals. French students in Year 11 can understand spoken dialogue about shopping in a market and Year 12 French students have made enough progress to sustain animated discussions on topics such as religious beliefs. The greatest overall weakness throughout the school is that students do not check their written work carefully enough. At Key Stages 3 and 4, students are stronger in listening, speaking and reading than they are in writing. Girls usually attain better results than boys. There are no significant variations between students of different ethnicity, background or ability. Students spend most of their time using French or German when listening, speaking, reading and writing but these skills are at lower levels than they would be in English. Students seldom work with number, they have little access to computers and undertake little word-processing.

138. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is usually good and sometimes very good. This is improving standards of attainment and learning and ensures the always satisfactory and often good progress made by the students. Teachers plan activities in constructive sequences. They are proficient in the languages they teach, project their voices clearly, and have good accents. They generally use the foreign language for large parts of the lesson but sometimes use too much English. They do not use overhead projectors sufficiently but use other resources effectively to support learning. Standards of discipline are generally good. Time is used well and most teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs or groups although this approach is not sufficiently used by others. Displays of students' work, maps, posters and other authentic material increase the students' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Students' work is assessed regularly and results inform subsequent teaching. Homework is relevant and regular.

139. Teachers manage classes well and employ a good range of different approaches. For example, in a Year 8 French class, the teacher encouraged students to take over her role, pointing to different parts of their bodies and asking the rest of the class to name them. The teacher wrote up the key phrases for students to copy into their exercise books. Finally, the teacher played a tape-recording and students had to write down the parts of the body they heard. In a Year 9 German class, the teacher reminded the students to listen to key words before playing a tape-recording about food. Students worked in pairs to write short dialogues about food in their exercise books and, finally, they read a text about food and answered questions. In both these lessons, teachers used a wide variety of well-chosen activities and resources to keep students actively involved throughout. The

students worked very well on the different tasks in pairs and larger groups and made very good progress. Teachers make satisfactory provision for students with special educational needs.

140. The vast majority of students behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is usually good, and sometimes very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Many students show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs and groups and enjoy the opportunities to use their initiative in creating role-plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few students find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential. Most students, including the most and least able and those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons at both key stages and in the sixth form.

141. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements and the head of the department monitors the progress of students in both languages. The department is very well led and organised and has prioritised development plans although the implementation of many of these is hampered by the scarcity of resources. Exchanges with France and Germany encourage social interaction and personal responsibility. The textbooks and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most students, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. The department has successfully addressed almost all the issues raised in the last inspection report. GCSE results and procedures for assessment have improved and students are speaking more French and German to communicate with their teachers and with each other. However, insufficient use of pair work and overhead projectors, lack of resources and errors in written work are preventing students from achieving higher standards.

MUSIC

142. In 1999, teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 judged attainment to be above national standards, with boys' attainment being above that of boys nationally, but below that of the girls. The percentage of students obtaining grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was well below the national average but the proportion obtaining grades A* to G was above the national figure. Girls' results were below the national averages but no figures are available for the boys. The number of students involved is small but these results are not as good as they were in most other subjects in the school. Since the last inspection, the proportion of A* to C grades obtained in the GCSE examinations has been erratic, reaching 100 per cent in 1996, going down to 46 per cent in 1997, rising again in 1998 and going down in 1999, when the results were well below those at the time of the last inspection. At A level, the four candidates entered obtained a grade C, two grade Ds and one grade E. These results are average at best.

143. In the limited range of activities seen during the inspection, overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was at the expected level although there were some outstanding examples of much higher attainment. Students know and understand a good number of composing strategies, such as phrase and answering phrase, the use of pentatonic scales, ostinato and drone. They are familiar with basic chords and can use them to harmonise melodies. Students know and understand the musical elements, have a good musical vocabulary and some knowledge of composers and styles, including those used in Indian music.

144. During the inspection and for some years previously, students following the GCSE music course have been limited to only one lesson per week of an hour's duration. Although students in Year 10 have an additional hour in 'twilight time', after the normal school day, this provision is insufficient and it has a detrimental effect on students' attainment and learning. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 was in line with national expectations in respect of performing and composing but students' knowledge and understanding of music were below this standard. Additional instrumental lessons enable many students to improve their performance and their knowledge of the rudiments of music and these attributes also stand them in good stead with regard to composition. However, they cannot make up for the inadequate amount of time spent on acquiring knowledge and understanding of composers, works, styles, forms and instrumentation, and it is in these areas that students are weak. This factor contributes significantly to the lower than average proportion of A* to C grades obtained in the GCSE examinations.

145. In the limited amount of work seen at A level, attainment was unsatisfactory. One student had difficulty in playing simple two-part music, which is a severe handicap to attainment when exercises in figured bass have to be checked and examined. To some extent, it is possible to compensate for this by judicious use of technology but this is not allowed in examinations and, in this important area of composition, the student's attainment was below the required level.

146. Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 but less good in the sixth form, where more effort could be made through personal study to remedy important weaknesses. Students across the school are well behaved in music lessons and concentrate well. They respect musical equipment and are aware how expensive it is to replace. There is a good take-up for the subject at GCSE, particularly in the current Year 10.

147. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Some excellent and very good teaching at Key Stage 3 is characterised by lively, well planned and expertly presented lessons which hold the interest of students at all levels of ability and which are hugely enjoyed by them. Singing is a good feature of the lessons sampled. Schemes of work are well planned. At Key Stage 4, there is insufficient time to teach the full GCSE syllabus effectively so that, although the teaching is good, it cannot compensate for time lost. In the sixth form, although teaching is adequate, it lacks pace and teachers have not been able to remedy students' weaknesses. Assessment is a weakness in this department and the arrangements for this should be reviewed so that students know precisely how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

148. The quality of learning is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students' intellectual and creative effort is good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form but their knowledge and understanding of their learning are unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 3, all students, including those with special educational needs, acquire higher levels of skills, knowledge and understanding than are expected nationally for their age. This was demonstrated very well in an excellent Year 7 lesson where there was a high proportion of students with special educational needs. This lesson set out to explore the pentatonic scale and its properties through improvisation. The teacher skilfully organised the class into a circle with pairs of students each sharing a tuned percussion instrument. The idea of melodic question and answer was introduced and the teacher worked around the circle playing a question and each student making an appropriate response. All did this successfully a number of times with increasing confidence. They then learned how to improvise an ostinato and a drone and they were

soon able to combine all of these effects very musically against a piano accompaniment provided by the teacher. At the end of this lesson, which developed at a cracking pace and demanded the students' concentration the whole time, they were keen to go on. All levels of ability had been challenged and had effectively met the challenge. This was a model lesson in which learning, progress and creative effort were quite excellent.

149. The very good instrumental provision is efficiently organised and the extensive and strong extra-curricular music, including a splendidly-equipped early music group, is a credit to the school and to the commitment of the teachers in this lively and hard working department. About 20 per cent of students - a high proportion - extend their musical attainment with additional instrumental lessons or singing lessons. Many of these gain further experience and enrichment through their participation in the numerous vocal and instrumental groups which flourish in the school. Good use is made of musical technology although resources for the subject are not generous. However, the shortage of tuned percussion instruments, identified as a weakness in the last inspection, has been remedied and very good use is made of this resource.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

150. In 1999, the results of teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were above the national average. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examination in sports studies was well above the national average and better than the results for most other subjects in the school. The proportion of A* to G grades was maintained at 100 per cent. However, the pattern of results since the last inspection has been variable. They were well below the national averages in 1997 and 1998 but well above them in 1996 and 1999. For the first time, a small group of students in Year 13 are being entered for the A level examination.

151. Standards in work seen during the inspection were at the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 3 and above these levels at the end of Key Stage 4. Limited observation of the work of the A level groups in the sixth form showed standards to be slightly above those expected nationally. Good literacy skills are encouraged. Students are articulate in discussion and the quality of their learning is supported by the use of good listening and communication skills when they evaluate their own and others' performances. Written assignments for GCSE and A level coursework are satisfactorily presented. Most students confidently use number in a range of contexts. At Key Stage 3, they accurately measure and record pulse rates in health-related fitness work and they use mental arithmetic when coping with scoring systems. Students on the GCSE and A level courses analyse and summarise numerical data. However, information and communications technology is used very little at any level of work.

152. Students make good progress through Key Stage 3 and they plan work and judge performance effectively. Teachers provide opportunities in a high proportion of lessons for independent learning. Most students show good levels of individual skills in games. They understand the rules, the principles of attack and defence and basic tactics. Higher attainers can consistently outmanoeuvre opponents by using refined skills and good spatial awareness. Lower-attaining students experience problems in applying their skills effectively when under pressure in a real game. In gymnastics, most students show control, fluency and creativity in building sequences although lower attainers lack basic co-ordination. Students undertake a well-structured health-related fitness programme and their knowledge of what constitutes a healthy life-style is good. In a Year 9 lesson, students planned their own warm-ups and cool-downs, examined various methods of improving cardio-vascular fitness and related pulse-rates to the intensity of exercise.

153. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, students have made very good progress and developed good skills in planning and evaluation to help them improve their performance. For example, students in Year 11 practised crossing a football in pairs and small groups and then under match conditions, improving the height and depth of their crosses, the timing of attacking runs and methods of defence. Higher attainers in badminton improve the placement of their shots and the variety of their services and practise disguise to outmanoeuvre their opponents. Lower attainers show poor footwork and co-ordination in badminton and often lack spatial and tactical awareness. Students following the GCSE course are on target to achieve above average results. In all work seen, a good proportion of students have a detailed knowledge of theory, in particular the correct physiological and psychological methods of preparing for participation in sport. They are well motivated and benefit from specialist teaching. Higher-attaining students research information, analyse data and draw accurate conclusions. A level students in Year 12 are on target to do better than expected nationally and those in Year 13 are likely to reach the expected standards. Most students show good coaching skills, including the effective planning and correction of performance.

154. The quality of teaching and learning is very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and good at Key Stage 3. The consistently good teaching is a real strength of the department. From the start of Key Stage 3, students quickly learn new skills, basic tactics and rules and develop knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. A well-planned curriculum is a considerable aid to progression at Key Stage 4 and allows students to learn new activities. As students move through the school, they refine their techniques and develop better understanding of tactics, fitness, rules and safety. Teachers manage their classes extremely well and maintain very good relationships with them. Their expectations are very high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour, kit and safety. Opportunities for independent learning are provided in a high proportion of lessons. In a Year 10 netball lesson, students confidently led the warm-ups, they planned tactics against defensive formations and then accurately judged the effectiveness of their performance, making good progress. Attitudes to learning are very good. Students listen to instructions, communicate well in group work and confidently try new skills. Systematic progress is aided by knowledgeable, well-planned and challenging teaching.

155. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into lessons and learn well because the teaching is planned to suit their individual requirements. Rules and instructions are simplified, equipment adapted and groupings carefully set. The few who have severe learning difficulties receive excellent additional support in practical work. However, there is no extra support for those students with special educational needs who are in examination groups and this limits their progress in the theoretical aspects of the work. At all stages, extension work for higher attainers is readily available through extra-curricular sport. Sixth form students build on previously learnt skills and knowledge. Their skills in games and their ability to analyse performance and communicate are developing to a high level. Physical education is not compulsory in the sixth form but a wide-range of school-based and off-site opportunities are offered, including the Community Sports Leaders' Award.

156. The head of department provides good leadership and a dedicated team of well-qualified specialists provides excellent support. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with the exception that dance is not offered to boys, but the time allocated for the programmes of study at Key Stage 4 is below national recommendations. All appropriate policies are in place, except for the formal provision for risk assessment. Schemes of work are satisfactory and include detailed methods and criteria for assessing students' attainment.

Short-term planning is good but longer-term planning is unsatisfactory. The staff in the department and a small proportion of other teachers provide a successful extra-curricular sports programme in which a very high percentage of students participate. Individuals and teams compete successfully in a wide range of sports at all levels and some represent their county or belong to the national teams for their age groups. Physical education makes a considerable contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of students.

157. Overall, there has been very good progress in this subject since the last inspection. Standards at the end of all key stages, judged from work seen during the inspection, have improved to above the national average. Teaching across the curriculum has improved from being good to being very good and all the issues arising from the last inspection have been successfully tackled.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

158. In work seen during the inspection, students' attainments at the age of fourteen were above the expected levels. They can identify the main features of the faiths studied, such as the elements of the Pesach in Judaism, and they are developing an understanding of the concepts behind religious practices, such as the offering of alms in Buddhist communities. Students can use research to develop their understanding of Christian buildings, as is demonstrated by their projects on the local church, although there are limited opportunities for extended writing.

159. The proportion of students who gained A* to C grades in the 1999 GCSE examination was well below the national average. There has been a downward trend in results since the last inspection, although the numbers entering for the examination have risen. The reduction in the amount of time allocated to the subject has had a detrimental effect on results, as there is now insufficient time to complete the course fully. No students are following the GCSE course in Year 10. In work seen in class, students' attainment is in line with the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. The majority of students have a secure knowledge of the main characteristics of the Christian Church and an understanding of the lives of Christian communities, such as friaries. Visits to Hillfield Friary have enabled students to gain first-hand knowledge of the work being done there. Students understand the main teachings of Jesus, as delivered through the parables and the Sermon on the Mount, and can paraphrase the teachings in their own words. Their work displays evidence of research and thoughtful interpretation of information but they have limited opportunities for extended writing apart from this.

160. All students at Key Stage 4 follow the non-certificated, core religious education course. Attainment in lessons observed is in line with the expectations for such a course. However, there is little written work to enable students to build up a record of information and their recall of earlier work is weak. They have opportunities to consider contemporary issues, such as abortion and euthanasia, in the light of religious belief. Visiting speakers provide specialist knowledge on the misuse of drugs and are able to respond to questions in the light of first-hand experience. Discussion of these issues is good and students demonstrate a willingness to challenge and enquire. However, they do not readily make links with their earlier knowledge of religious belief gained at Key Stage 3. Students consider how belief affects the attitudes of different faiths to ultimate questions, such as death and the existence of an after-life. The majority make correct responses to questions raised but there is little evidence that they develop their ideas further or that they have a clear understanding of the implications of belief. They consider questions of morality and are encouraged to develop their own beliefs and values whilst recognising that the beliefs and values of others may be different yet equally valid.

161. The quality of learning and the rate of progress are always satisfactory and often good across both key stages. Students with special educational needs make good progress at Key Stage 3. Although there is no direct support for them in class, they make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4, owing to the use of discussion and paired work, and the banding system enables teachers to set appropriately challenging tasks. There is insufficient religious education in the sixth form to comply with statutory requirements or to enable a judgement to be made about standards of attainment. A philosophy course is offered as part of general studies but this is taught outside the religious education department.

162. The attitudes and behaviour of students in religious education are good. Students are generally well behaved and treat their teachers and their peers with respect. At Key Stage 4, there was evidence of a lack of personal challenge in responses during the core religious education groups, although challenge was higher during discussion. There is a good rapport between students and their teachers, and students work well in pairs or groups. Attitudes are particularly good when students are actively involved and clearly understand the focus of the lesson, as in a Year 8 class on the use of painting as a portrayal of Christian faith.

163. Teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages and sometimes it is good or very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and are confident in their handling of topics. Lessons are well planned and, in the best lessons, there is a clear focus and progression that is obvious to the students and enables them to build upon previous knowledge. Teachers manage students well and are excellent role-models, listening to their opinions and treating them with respect. Homework is used well at Key Stage 3 to extend learning although marking of work is designed to encourage rather than to inform. Homework is not used to extend learning opportunities at Key Stage 4 and, as a result, teachers' assessment of work is unreliable and is not linked to specific attainment targets. Lessons include a variety of teaching strategies and good use is made of silence, music and art to develop an appreciation of the abstract concepts inherent in the subject. The department makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual and cultural development.

164. The department has a clear ethos that reflects that of the school. Students feel secure and are willing to consider the beliefs of others and the development of their own values and feelings. The numerous educational visits and visiting speakers extend students' first-hand knowledge and understanding and the department has a satisfactory selection of artefacts and video-recordings to encourage interest and involvement. There is not enough time to teach the GCSE full course and the use of the nine-week cycle for the core course limits the students' progress and the teachers' ability to monitor effectively. No reports are provided for the core religious education course at Key Stage 4. The present Year 11 course does not comply with statutory requirements, as it covers only one third of the cycle, but there are clear plans to phase out this course by the end of this year. As a result of these changes, the schemes of work are still undeveloped and the GCSE course is under review. A lack of sufficient specialist staff has resulted in the school not being able to offer an A level course. The head of department has good links with the community and with a large proportion of the schools sending their pupils to Woodroffe School. He is committed to the spiritual development of the students but the size of the department limits opportunities for delegation and for the sharing of ideas.

165. Since the last inspection, there has been some increase in the time allocated at Key Stage 4, although it is still unsatisfactory, and health education is still added on to the

curriculum for religious education. There is passing reference to religious education in the sixth form but the time allocation is inadequate and so the school still fails to meet the statutory requirements. Homework is now set regularly at Key Stage 3 but not at Key Stage 4 and there are still insufficient textbooks for use at home. Students are now more fully involved in lessons and, when given the opportunity, they respond well.